I hear cop sirens, but they swoop right past me and the wounded boy. I'm wondering if they see us, but I'm not sure if they do. I look up again and notice that I'm alone and all my boys have run away. I continue looking down the street at the group of boys gathering across the street looking in our direction. I also look down at the shot boy and realize they may be the shooters. I get up and run for my security before they start shooting at me for helping. I run up several blocks before I turn around and see them unloading rounds in the direction I was just standing. I realize that they are shooting the boy I was helping.

Two minutes later, I go back to where they were shooting and see the boy laid out dead with bullet holes all over him.

check out Quad-B's piece and the first installment of The Revolutionaries on page 4

EDITOR'S NOTE: VOLUME 12.11+

Welcome to our latest issue-and-a-half Beat Within publication, which features the remainder of issue 12.10 and all of issue 12.11!

Before we get the ball rolling with this editorial, we want to inform you that if you really want The Beat Within publication mailed to you, a lot more frequently than you have been recieving this gem, we encourage you to write us! With every letter/contribution we receive, we will send you the latest Beat, especially now where our Beat mailing list is on standstill given the the cost to print Beats, to the production end of folding, inserting The Beat in the envelope, and labeling. We are short staffed and given our time with two publications and the numerous workshops, like we said, we encourage you to drop us a line, every week if that's the case, if you really want to keep up with The Beat Within, and kindly request the latest Beat!

Now, allow us to introduce to you our colleague Siliva, who will give us readers a glimpse inside the new Alameda County Juvenile Hall, that sadly many of you young ones will soon visit. With that said, we thought we would include an excerpt from his email that he sent us regarding this latest Beat outreach to the new hall a couple weeks ago. Siliva!

On Saturday, (Beat colleagues) Sheerly, Jennifer, Perry and I had the opportunity to be a part of the "Open To The Public Day, "at the new Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. We (The Beat Within) were one of many different programs that had an informational booth/table at the lobby of this new facility. As people (from all over the Bay Area) were coming in or out of their tours, they had a chance to stop by our table and hear about our program, as well as pick up a recent copy of The Beat Within that was made available.

A lot of people showed up for this day. The hours the new Juvenile Justice Center was open to the public was from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. No joke, there was literally a line out the door going out on the sidewalk, and extending all the way into the parking lot. Needless to say the turnout was a very good one and the staff did not expect such a turnout. Neither did we, which was evident in the fact that we ran out of Beats. I believe we had an estimate of 50 - 75 various issues, thinking low turn out.

The crowd varied from people who worked for local community programs, t those who wanted to start a community program, to a number of people who work for various parts of the Juvenile Justice System, ranging from probation, counselors, teachers, and volunteers. There were also some members from law enforcement. There were a lot of parents with their kids that were using this opportunity to give their child a first hand look at what juvenile hall looked like from the inside. My take is, this was their way of hoping to steer their kids away from crime, or another form of "Scared Straight," except without those who are incarcerated.

In my honest opinion this outreach was very successful in many ways.

One, we were able to share what The Beat Within is with other community programs and the curious. To our credit, some already heard about The Beat Within, but were now able to hear first hand from us facilitators/Beat people who were present this day. There was many who never heard about our program but were very enthused and supportive of what we do. Just about everyone had questions and we were more than happy to answer those questions.

Two, it was good that we were there because some people from probation, etc, had heard of us, but have yet to meet us or would never meet us because of the time we conduct our workshops – in the evenings. Again were able to answer any questions as well as give them an issue of The Beat Within.

Three, for a lot of the parents that have heard about our program from their kids, this was their chance too to meet us. All of the parents commended us on what we do and inspired us to "keep up the good work." Some parents were amazed at what their child had shared or contributed while in the workshops. Some of the kids introduced us by "this is The Beat, remember I told you about them!?" It was very touching, gratifying and moving.

There is a list of numerous names and e-mails that we collected and will be getting back to because we ran out of Beats and didn't have any business cards to pass out. Again, I don't think anyone could have predicted the turnout, or can we even send them Beats, given we can't even give our favorite people Beats at times.

I must say this, I have been a part of a lot of different outreaches into the community over the years repping The Beat WIthin. Whether it was Youth Empowerment Expo's in San Francisco and Sacramento, to outreaches/presentations at local middle and high schools, to continuation schools, or even a presentation to a Rookie Officers who had just graduated from the Police Academy. This morning was truly unique because there was always someone at our table just about the whole time we were there, asking questions, wanting to know a little bit more about the program, or to pick up a Beat and hear one of us break down The Beat for them. The poster/bus shelter we used definitely attracted a lot of people.

It was amazing what we saw. I remember in 1999 when Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall was adding on their extension to the hall. I've also witnessed the new Hillcrest aka San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, and I'm currently doing workshops in the new YGC aka Juvenile Justice Center in San Francisco. And now I have seen the new Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center. I think it is amazing yet frightening how much money has been spent within the past eight years in the name of "Juvenile Justice." We're talking about several brand new facilities, and an extension to one. And who's to say what's in the works?

A lot of different people stand out for their own reason from that day. Whether it was the lady who said that her four and six year olds were starting to get into trouble and she hoped this would steer them clear. To the lady who asked how we were funded and when we answered that we were a non-profit, she quickly answered that she wrote grants.

Or to a Deputy Director I was introduced to by a counselor/ instructor I've worked with in the past in the SF Juvenile System. I was asked by the lady what my opinion of the hall was. I was hesitant/cautious for I didn't know exactly who this lady was. She heard a little about my past from the counselor, but also heard of what I'm now doing today and she was quite impressed. She heard my hesitation and proceeded to give me her "honest opinion." She said she almost cried when she first saw the new facility because of the "prison look" that it has. But she was hopeful and optimistic that the facility would "rehabilitate" and not "punish." I agreed with her. I later came back with a copy of The Beat and asked if she would like a copy. She seemed very sincere when she said, "Yes, thank you very much."

One thing that we Beat facilitators agreed on, those of us who were fortunate enough to have made it, was that we should do more outreaches. I agree with this whole heartedly because through outreaches we have been able to establish some very valuable realtionships. Whether it has been with people who eventually come and volunteer for The Beat, to people asking us to come and do a presentation at their program and/or school. To just sharing The Beat with those who may have yet to hear what The Beat Within actually is. I also believe that it can be a good way for us to include some of the young people who are our interns, so they too can share their story, as well as push themselves in other work related areas.

Over time we will see what comes out of all these new facilities, hopefully a lot more than a new facility that looks like a modern day adult prison, and we're sure that's what the powers that be want too, a safe place that rehabilitates Thanks Siliva!

This week, our topics addressed in the 12.10 issue were

"A Chance To Speak, But You Can't" -Has there ever been a time when you had something very important to say to someone, or something you were holding inside for so long, but when the time came to speak your mind, "the cat got your tongue" and you couldn't say it? Then, before you knew it, the chance to speak your mind passed. What kept you from taking advantage of the moment? Why was it so hard for you to speak honestly when the opportunity came? Is it easier to say things on paper than to speak them out loud? If so, here's your chance to write what you could never say.

Second topic, "How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know" - Sadly, we know that all of you are locked up and we also know how awful an experience it is. But what if someone who really cared and who really didn't know wanted to learn how it is being locked up — like a mother, a teacher, a friend? How would you tell this person? How would you describe what you go through on a day to day basis to this person? And be serious, because again, you're teaching someone who really cares and also really doesn't know... What would you say to them about how it is being locked up? What would you say to make that experience real for them?

The third topic, "If Your Life Were A Soundtrack, What Would Your Theme Song Be?"

Our last 12.10 topic, "Be My Valentine" –This week, a lot of flowers will be given, a lot of chocolate will be eaten, and a lot of cards will be exchanged saying "Be My Valentine". So our question is a very simple one: Is love a matter of words or a matter of deeds? Is it more important to say "I love you" or to show your love? Don't just answer this question with one sentence. Give us examples, and share the details.

And the 12.11 topics... "An Unfinished Puzzle" -Imagine that the life you lived up until now were a puzzle. You're trying to put it all together, but some pieces are missing. What pieces are you missing? And if you say you already have all the pieces, describe what those pieces are... Is the puzzle complete, or are there more pieces you need to add on? What will it take for you to complete this puzzle?

The second topic, "Who You Mad At?" -Of all the encounters you've had and the things you've seen and done, who are you mad at the most and why? Do you see yourself forgiving this person? We know this can be a topic that people disrespect by writing things we can't put in The Beat, so let us know who you're mad at the most and why as respectfully as you can...

Third topic, "Happy Thoughts"-What makes you smile, or makes you feel happy every time you think about it? Is it a person? The memory of a good experience? A place you went to when you were little? Grandma's mac & cheese? Or the thought of something to come, like when you get out or when you get your own place? Tell us what makes you smile when you think about it.

Last but not least, "Accomplishment"-Tell us about an accomplishment — something you've done — that you're proud of...

Knowing all this, now lets praise this issue's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients! They are Can't Get Right, Jemiel, Lil' Papa (writes two), Chyna, Big Vic, and Esoteric Rainbow (writes three) all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Lucero, Paradise (writes two), Lil' Scari, Birdman, and Big D.

All right, this issue goes out to rehabilitation, it's a must if you have a problem that keeps you down and incarcerated. Our suggestion for those interested in correcting their lives, have a game plan, stick around people that care and want to support the new and improved you! It's not going to be easy, but shhh, life isn't easy. Best!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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From The Beat: We are extremely honored to have in our pages the young Revolutionaries of U6. Wherever they come from, we are thrilled that they see The Beat Within as the venue to teach, challenge and be heard. This is the first of several installments given we were bombarded by the Revs and their thought provoking views. This installment is an amazing bunch of writing, that we are sure you will enjoy. We want to extend our thanks to you fabulous writers and our friend, Megan Mercurio, who without her passion and love for this work has made this page a reality! With that said, we bring you the Revolutionaries! Look out for more next week!

The Revolutionaries, The Introduction

We are the students temporarily residing in U6; however we purposefully choose not to incorporate the unit's name, or any other aspect of this institution into the title of this page. For, we refuse to allow our incarceration to bind our minds or silence our voices. In our daily meetings, we use creative writing and performing arts to explore our minds and to critique the world around us. Please listen to our stories without judgment, and allow our voices to overpower the walls the will never truly contain us. The following pieces are account of our first vivid memories.

Special Thanks: Dana Warden.

That January Night

My very first vivid memory that I see is a little boy being shot to death by gang members. I see his mother rushing to his cold, dying, body, and him, screaming, crying and waking up the whole neighborhood.

It is a cold January night in Bayview Hunter's Point and cops are already out responding to a previous shooting in the neighborhood.

I am standing outside with my homies and we all see this little banger running out of an alleyway. We see him running down towards Third Street. He runs with a slight limp, when he falls to the ground and my boys and I go running to him. We're all staring at him, contemplating what to do for him.

We call the police to come, and even though they're in the area, they still continue to let themselves be occupied with whatever they're doing and take their own sweet time.

I look up and see other boys heading straight in our direction. My friend is the first to take off running, followed by two other guys who are with us.

I hear cop sirens, but they swoop right past me and the wounded boy. I'm wondering if they see us, but I'm not sure if they do. I look up again and notice that I'm alone and all my boys have run away. I continue looking down the street at the group of boys gathering across the street looking in our direction. I also look down at the shot boy and realize they may be the shooters. I get up and run for my security before they start shooting at me for helping. I run up several blocks before I turn around and see them unloading rounds in the direction I was just standing. I realize that they are shooting the boy I was helping.

Two minutes later, I go back to where they were shooting and see the boy laid out dead with bullet holes all over him.

-Quad-B

The Dollhouse

I am in my kindergarten class and our break just got started. But our teacher decided to make an announcement just as the whole class separates into two groups: boys and girls. All the boys freeze as if we were on our way to the wooden blocks. All of the girls stepped out of the dollhouse. Then the teacher shocks everyone when she announces that she wants everyone to switch. The boys have to play at the dollhouse and the girls have to play with the blocks.

Aww, na it's horrible. I get so mad, I just have to throw all the blocks all over the floor. The teacher tells me to stop messing around to go into the dollhouse, just this one time. I really don't want to but hey, I have no choice.

I walk through the door to go in and I wanna rip my eyes out. Oh my God it's horrible. There's a little kitchen, a bedroom with cribs full of dolls, aww na.

I start to wonder, "Is it hot in here, or is it just me?" Then I realize that it's just me. I walk out and ask the teacher, "Are you kidding me?" But she just looks at me with a serious look on her face and that's all I need to know. I walk back in and still can't believe what I see. By now all the boys have begun to realize what a mistake this is, nobody knows what to do. So I just decide to make a mess. If I have to suffer, so will the girls. So I start putting the baby dolls in the oven and the microwave, even two in the fridge. The rest are going overboard. One by one they start flying over the walls. Now everyone begins to follow my lead and starts to destroy things.

By the time the teacher walks in on us, there are items all over the place. The teacher tells us all to leave out of the doll house and the teacher has a disappointed look on her face.

When the girls see it, they get angry and start yelling. The teacher looks down shaking her head at her failed experiment. But all the boys have grins on their faces, knowing this will never happen again.

-Mutha Hogg

First Grade

I remember I am six and I am going to first grade. As I walk in the class, a lot of kids are looking at me. My mom goes to sign me in and gives me a hug and kiss goodbye and as she leaves, a kid by the name of Henery asks me, "Why does your mom dress like a boy?" I told him, "I don't know."

As I play with the blocks, I think about what Henery asked me. My mom comes to pick me up with another girl that I knew was not my family. So when my mom, that girl and I are going home, I ask my mom why she dresses like a boy. She tells me, "Because I'm gay." When I ask her what this means, she says it's when a person likes the same sex as what they are. She tells me, "I'm a lesbian, which is a girl that likes a girl."

Being that young, I thought I was going to get cooties no matter what because I found out that my mom was not the only lesbian: my sister, three cousins and two aunties are also lesbians. Being six, I was getting teased for having more than one mommy. Growing up with lesbians taught me a lot about them, what they like, don't like and how to treat a female.

-Cuba

The Cup

I enter the white walled kitchen to see my mom making coffee and my dad washing dishes. I feel so small as my three-year-old body looks up towards the summit of the tall plain buildings and towers my parents tall tables and counters. I'm really not doing much besides standing there and looking about, waiting for some sort of fun to pop out at me from anywhere: for a red balloon to burst through the oven doors. ACTION AT 9:00!

To my left, my mom just barely places a steaming white cup on top of the tall counter. I immediately head towards it, wanting to hold it and see what is inside the cup- even though it is quite obvious that it's just coffee. Nevertheless, I reach as high as I can and I am barely able to grab the wide handle with two fingers. I pull, and it tips over brownish steaming liquid that seems to float down right in front of my face, changing to different abstract forms through the air. SHATTER!

The cup hits the floor and shatters all over the floor. Inches from my feet, the dark brown liquid slaps my hand with such extreme force that my young body cannot tolerate it. I scream wildly and crazed like an animal possessed, swinging my left arm manically in all directions, trying to get the pain off of me.

Both my parents rush over to me. My mom screaming to the wind like I have been shot, and my dad screaming, "hijo!!" As though I have fallen down an endless well and he couldn't reach me in time. My mom runs to the freezer, pours ice cubes into a plastic bag and runs a few feet back and places it on my arm. I am still scared out of my mind, and the pain is raging still, but it starts to cool down little by little. I slowly start to stop crying after a long time has passed. I ended up with a huge scar on my left forearm. I still have it to this day.

-Franklin

The Attic

My little brother and I are playing tag in our new house and I am hiding from my brother in the closet. When he finds me on top of the shelf, I jump back so he can't tag me. Then, all of a sudden, I bump my head on the ceiling and feel strange because the ceiling went up. Then I push it with my hand and it opens up and it is dark. So I tell my brother to go get the flashlight then he asks, "why?' I tell him to just go get and he says "I'm not going to, you tell me why". Then I tell him I've found a new place to hide in from our little sister. So he goes and gets it out of the toolbox.

When he comes back with it, we go up there. I flash the light all around the room. When I spot a light switch, I turn it on and we look around and find a bike. We both grab it and push it, but it won't fit so we leave it alone then we look around some more. We find an old shotgun, so we grab it and leave the attic and play with it in my room because I have a lock on my door.

My mom is walking around the house putting stuff up while my brother and I sneak and play with the shotgun. After we play with it, I tell him to stand outside my room door so he can come tell me when my mom is coming; also so he won't know where I put it.

Two days later a man comes and knocks on the door at my house and asks to talk to my mom. She asks who he is and he says, "John Doe". She asks how she can help him and he says he used to live here and he's left something behind. She asks what it is and he tells her it's an old gun that didn't work but it was worth a lot of money. She tells him to hurry up and to get it out of the house. He goes to the laundry room and pulls a latch and stairs come down and he goes up them.

When he comes down he asks my mom if I've been up there and she says no; he asks us if we've been up there and I say no too fast so she knows I am lying. She says she's seen me up there, so my brother has told that I got the flashlight and that I went up there and came down with the gun. I told him that if he told mama I was going to beat him up. But my mom knows we are both lying so we get whipped until I tell that the gun was under my bed.

The man watches and feels bad and tells my mom it is his fault and he should have gotten the gun from up there when he moved. After she whips us, we get the gun from under the bed and he tells my brother and I that he has something for us. He goes back and pulls out the stairs and comes back down with the bike we were trying to get out the other way which was in the closet.

-Big brother

I hear cop sirens, but they swoop right past me and the wounded boy. I'm wondering if they see us, but I'm not sure if they do.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

To My Big Bro Doing "Life" — Part One

keep ya head and stay strong
we all know the judge did you wrong
they don't give a damn about us
so who can we trust
only god knows our pain
maybe we both could be together again
in paradise living life right
no more pain or sorrow
even happy to see tomorrow
instead of in yo' cell feeling fed up
and like you wanna give up
"my brotha" dry your eyes and realize
that trouble don't last long
it gonna get better
i know it's hard waking up every day
trying to face the reality
that you will never be free
but keep it pushin'
like a souljah on a mission
some people wouldn't last in yo' position
especially that white jury
who was quick to throw that "L" in your face
and looked at you like you was a disgrace
"my brotha" losing you to the prison system
made me feel like a victim
i will never forget the things you taught me
remember when it was just me and you
tryin' to make it on our own
we never had family give us support
so we had to get things on our own
there was a time
we didn't even have a home to go to

-Can't Get Right, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When there's no one out there to care for a boy, to buy him clothes and food and toys, he turns to the street to find the family he needs — and that's where you found your brother. And you did what you felt you needed to do together, and right or wrong didn't even matter, 'cause your hopes to live life right were already shattered. The deeper problem comes when you were old enough to reexamine your decisions; you were old enough to get jobs to buy your provisions. But you were stuck in the game and the question is — why? Addicted to the fast money and life style? Or you built you defenses too high and believed the lies that still told you this was the only way for you to get by. Or maybe it was that false sense of pride that's like a cave where you can hide what otherwise can't be denied. We're not saying your friend and brother deserved life in prison, after all who else was there to help a young man make difficult decisions. But you're in the Hall, hopefully with a chance to change it all! You call yourself "Can't Get Right", but you're wrong. Maybe you couldn't before, but now that you know what's in store, it's time to fight that inner fight where you face truth. You can get right. Pray like it all depends on God and act like it all depends on you! You'll read/see Part 2 and 3 in the CoPOW section of this issue! Powerful work!

Mad At My Dad

i'm mad at my dad — why
because he didn't even try
he had the money
but he also had his honey
he rarely came around
but when he did all he did
was throw money around
as if three to four hundred dollars
could buy off three to five years
without a father
not a dad but a father
and what would my mom do
fall back in love with his —
and the glass one too
my pops was a pimp but he couldn't take
responsibility like a man
he didn't look me in my face
not one time and give me some
father to son
game
all the skills he knew
was to push
that crack that ass and that cocaine
sporting games
with pops
dinner
with pops
female conversations
but my dad was gone
we had no relations
and those would have been priceless

-Jemiel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The wisdom you've gathered through the absence of a father is more profound than anything the man you describe might have taught you. Sure, you've had to learn the hard way, making all the mistakes of a boy growing up in the 'hood trying to act like he imagines a man would. But now you see exactly what you don't want to be — that man who never knew how to be a father to you. Here's a hard truth for which there's no subsitute: you're old enough now to start truly fathering you all by yourself (though if you're one of the lucky ones, you'll find someone with a man's wisdom to help, a counselor, a teacher, an uncle, a neighbor, whoever) — but you've already learned this truth: pimping and slanging is not what real men do. Your dad did (negatively) teach this to you. So don't just get mad, get right with your own life!

Blindness

There is a lot to explain to a person who has not been locked up before. What goes on, on the inside?

To me, there is a physical and a mental part to it. First of all, your freedom is stripped from you, and you are made to take commands from another man or even woman. That is physical.

Mental is the real burden to deal with. When you are locked up, it affects different parts of your emotions and your self-esteem and confidence. I think one emotion I picked up from being in here is anger, and when you get out, you're just an angry person.

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You expressed this very well. But if "mental is the real burden," it is also the real strength, the belief that you can overcome the effects this place has caused you to feel, and conquer that self-destructive emotion, anger. We hope you know that your real revenge for the way the system has "served" you is to succeed, to do good, to defy all their expectations because you can!

Still I Stand

You can make fun of my face in color I'll always remember people fought for this color, even my grandmother you could call me names to put me down but when it's all over I'll be the one you need now Does my smartness make you mad? Still I stand with my head high when I pass Holdin' my hand high to my people of color I'll always remember people fought for my color even my grandmother Still I stand Still I stand through the hatefulness people speak I'll hold my breath but forever never hold my peace most say my history is nothin' but shame thanks for my color I'm always have fame still I stand Do you stand when people talk loud about your skin? Still I stand 'cause I know this ain't the end I'ma keep my peace with my color I'll always remember people fought for my color, even my grandmother Still I stand.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow. You really soar in this one. Barack Obama came to speak in Oakland last weekend, and we wish we'd had this poem with us for him to hear. Because Obama might end up being the next president, who knows, but whether he wins or loses, just the fact that he's in the election at all is partly because of the people who fought for your color, "even your grandmother." (You know your poetry is getting into people's hearts and skins when they quote you back to yourself). Take this pride and remember it, not just when someone else tries to bring you down, but when YOU are about to do something that might bring you down. Peace.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Who You Mad At

me, myself
i'm mad at the world
i wish i had a better life
ever since i was a lil' girl
mad at my mom and dad
for not giving me a rich life
only thing they do
is fight, fight, fight
all that fighting
made me get madder
and when i got madder
it only made me sadder
then once you' sad
it makes you mad all over again
you start fighting other people
only trying to win
but then in the end
you realize you're mad at yourself
and the madness get' so crazy
you know you need professional help
but then you finally start to realize
the help you need is right inside you
you the only person you can be mad at
and you the only person can bring you back
to being the person you want to be
happy and healthy and free

-Chyna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Once you realize you're responsible for the problem, you discover that you're capable of providing the solution. We're not saying your parents fighting all the time was anything good for your mind or that everything that happens in this world is fair. But blaming them won't help you find the power to repair yourself, care for yourself and be there for yourself. So if you're mad at yourself and sad with yourself, it's time to see you need to be forgiving yourself and giving yourself the love that you need. You may be your parents' seed, but you can grow to be who you want to be — happy, healthy and free.

Late At Night

Sitting up late at night, blastin' some oldies
Damn how I've changed, don't even remember the old me
When I was a youngsta momma always told me
"Mijo te quiero Mucho" ("Son I love you")
she used to always hold me
Now she visits me several times a week
Tries to be strong, but I can see the tears she don't weep
My pops lookin' tired, can tell he don't sleep
Damn I messed up, got way in too deep
Call the house once in a while
But it's three dollars a minute every time I dial
And wastin' my parents money ain't my style
Still got bills to pay, got to go down the discount aisle
It cost way too much to be locked down in the hall
Plus we gotta pay every time we call
Hit the yard gotta be ready for war every time we ball
Hard foul, get back up right after the fall
Couple scratches and bruises like we been through hell
Still a juvenile so I get no bail
Once in a while I might get some mail
Set myself up to succeed never fail
Yeah I'm a boss but a different kind
A thug mentality, but I got knowledge in my mind
Did some dirt so I'm doing time for a serious crime
A star ready for exposure, waitin' to shine
Couple more years and I'll be out this hole
Ready to do it big and achieve my goals
I ain't got no more chances, no more dice rolls
Feels like the devil got my soul
But he don't and he never will
One day I might even be on a bill
Trying to survive but don't wanna get killed
Felling like a fish in air trying to breathe through gills
Satisfaction won't be here till my death is near
'Cause I can't live happy while life is here
While I'm in my eternal sleep, I won't live in fear
So tell the homies to pour some out for me while they drink beer.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The pain and emotions you see on your parents face must touch you pretty deep. You're experiencing the consequences to your actions and seeing how it's affected those that love you most. It's good that you now at least think about how they're struggling. So, what can you do for yourself to give them, and yourself, happiness and achieve what you want in life? Where does education fit into your picture? Eventually we all grow out of our old behaviors, is time your time for doing so? What matters most to you, your family, or your homies? Take the time to think about this one!

Happy Thoughts

Happy thoughts that comes up is being with my family. My brother and my mom, being with them, my childhood. Being at home with them, having a good time laughing, reuniting, being a real family just the three of us. Love care and fun.

Another happy thought is being with my best friend Looney doing crazy things, the old days, party, the 'hood, raza park, house parties. Being with my real-ass homegirl and the rest of all the homies another happy thoughts.

My whole life even my struggles. My school, graduating on time, I just need 26 more credits, my job, graduating my program, having responsibilities, taking care of me and moms, buying my own things, putting money on my brother's book.

But at the same time having fun with fam, friends and my dog. I take care of my mom, buy food, give her my work money. I clean the house for her. She took care of me, now it's my turn to take care others.

But now I'm in here, I support her to take care of her and worry about herself and not to come or worry about me 'cause I put myself in here and I gotta get out on my own and do this by myself.

-Lucero U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a wonderful long list of things that make you happy! You have the heart to do this yourself, Lucero. But with the support of your loving family, you aren't really doing it alone. You have been well prepared to take care of things. Now take care of yourself by giving up the things that lead you away from your mother, and giving her the one thing she wants more than anything else in the world — you!

God, Hear My Words

You think that it is easy, flashy cars, and finer things
With gold chains hanging, and shiny diamond rings
And deep down inside I'm beggin' for an exit out the game
But I made my own choices so there is no one I can blame
It is hard on the streets for a young black man
On the block chasin' paper I get it any way I can
You wanna know what it's like, walk a day in my shoes
Sell my soul for dead presidents 'cause I got everything to lose
There is a weight that I must carry, will my family eat tonight
Or just let them go on hungry and not put up a fight
I beg you God, hear these words from my mouth
And save me from this game, God I want to get out

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot of pain expressed in this tight poem, Paradise. The Catch-22 your facing with a hungry family you want to feed is that by getting your paper "any way" you can, you hand the system your own body, your own freedom, and then who is there to take care of your family? Praying for deliverance from this deadly game is the beginning of having your prayer answered, but only the beginning. God gives you a free will to exercise freely, either for good or for ill. You have seen the ill. Now, put your fine mind and heart to work for the good you can do yourself, and therefore your family. As you pray, listen to the prayer God is making to you and try to honor His prayer. Things can only get better.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

It's All Me

Who am I mad at? No one but me. For two reasons; only I made the decision to take that drive. I made the decision to enter my cell again. 'Cause to the cops this is home, this is where they believe that we belong. But it's not them. We throw wood that fuels the fire they have, that makes it so easy for them. We give them the motive they need to shackle us up from head to toe. No matter what they do, it's me that brings me back.

I'm the reason probation is on my back, the reason DA wants to give me the three years and two felony's. It's all me.

-Big D U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: So, if you know you are giving the system the rope to hang you with, what's keeping you from refusing to play their game? If they "know" this is where you belong, wouldn't it be sweet to show them they were wrong! Does having this knowledge make it easier, or harder for you to stop doing what you've been doing? Do "you" continue to "fuel their fire?" Or do you break out of the bondage you've put yourself in?

Life Was Like a Rainbow

At a young age I seen a lot of crime
From pimps, hoes and drug dealers goin' against time
I'll look out my window in which my brother grind
I want to have money so I had to get mines
Life was like a rainbow , you go up, you come down
those who come down is ones that's six feet now
Money was a boy's best dreams
To have money cars, girls and a big ass team
Everybody givin' you hella money as a kid,
I look aback and wish I can change some of the things I did
I never listened to what people said
Knowin' I was go' be in jail or dead
At the age of nine I was gettin' dough
I didn't care about life so I did move slow
Now in I'm older and see a way out of the game
No matter where I go, the game will still remain.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem comes out on the side of an answer to a riddle: The only way to win the game is not to play. The boy thought the money was the Dream, the man discovered that the dream was a nightmare.

To America

If I ever get a chance to speak with Bush or Arnold Schwarzenegger, I would really tell them how I feel on some real shhh. They don't know the struggles we go through on da streets, or how we live. All they know is blacks and browns or only criminals, and all we know is to rob and kill. But they don't know the real man. All they do is lie and say they're gonna help schools by cutting back money from everything else.

All Bush want to do is start shh with other countries and send more young people to war. He spends all this money on the war but don't help nobody with their needs. But we can spend more money on sending twenty-one thousand more troops to Iraq.

Then we got this fake-ass governor that's not one percent American. But how da hell this dude came from Austria to America and be a governor, and didn't grow up in one 'hood in the United States except Hollywood. Ha ha! That's how he won, from his lil' fan club votes.

With that said, I'm out dip.

-Lil' Scari U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a strong indictment against the President and the Governor, but we can't find fault with your analysis. There is a principle in Economics defined as "Guns or butter" — meaning the government chooses to spend our taxes on some combination between security (wars, prisons) and services (helping people). As tragic as it is, we have to agree with you about what they real care about and what they don't. Which is just another reason why you have to care for you. Even your government won't, so forget them. Get your education and do it yourself!

Wrong Ain't Never Been Right

Bullets fly by like an airline
Drugs get sold
People buying it like it's gold
Moments seems to go by fast
But it's just a fiend's mind, living for the blast
Drugs seem so weightless
Slangin' all night, getting no rest
It seems so bad at night
Yet it shines so bright
The nights seem endless
Making plots and schemes, like a game of chess
People flock here during the day
Blind to what happens when the sky turns gray
People set goals, think about the future
We live day by day, time goes by in a blurr
Till it's too late, thinking
Then it hits home
What did you do with your life?
Living moment by moment
Gets you wondering where your life went,
'cause once it's gone you don't get it back.
So spend your time wisely. A wise man told me,
"The wrong thing ain't never been right."

-Birdman U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love this poem because it lays out the lure of the endless night, adds some idealism with thoughts of the future, then leads finally to a kind of rude awakening, a realization that time is gone. Whoever that wise man is that you wrote about, we agree with him, and hope his words guide your future. The difference between a game of chess and "the game" of life is that when you lose at chess, you simply knock over the piece on the board representing the king. But when you lose here, you can't just re-assemble the board and start over.

A or B?

run or hide
live or die
truth or lies
give up or give in
sweet juice or tart gin
we all gotta grow up
crossroads to walk
getting younger on the track
crying "there's no way back"
children on our blocks
trying to sell them glittery rocks
so many questioning hearts out there
they'll never learn waiting here
buy in or sell out
real friends or fast money
can't have it all
choose to live right
choose to live fast
clean up your damn act
or innocent hands on a gat
life has no need to be raw
all these broken laws
get right, get wrong, get drunk
do you really have to lose it all
aren't you sick of these twisted halls

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you want to let wisdom shine through your rhymes, you make it shine like the sun in the summertime! Thanks for a powerful and persuasive poem that brings your meaning home. As for "innocent hands on a gat" — yeah, we're even with you on that, though the system now tries juveniles as adults with "gun enhancement" laws, even when tests show that a sixteen-year-old's brain is more like a child's than an adult's, and furthermore that the effect of alcohol on impulse control is far stronger on a child's (or young teen's) brain, which knowledge adds force to your line: "get right, get wrong, get drunk" (which is formally emphasized (1) by standing sandwiched between four lines with the same rhyme, and (2) by your breaking the binary opposition with a triad: indeed alcohol abuse transcends the opposition leading directly to the question of your next line!) Well done, young one!

It Was Her —— Part Two: The Fight

Summer ended, and I hadn't thought of her too often. Yet, when I saw her the first day back, I fell even harder then the last time. At first, she was distant, then she asked my opinion — and we became friends once more.

Yet my addiction called, and, with a drunken phone call, I destroyed the already shaky relationship. Her hate grew, even after every apology, after everything I did trying to please her — and my heart was breaking once more! Overwhelming emotion flooded my mind and blurred my sight. So within a week, I again tried to die, yet failed, like every other time. She didn't care, and that hurt burned like a thousand knives inside. And once again I turned to my addiction, trying to blur the pain.

Yet it merely transformed the hurt to hate — too much to drink and, with a heated smile, I put my shaking fist to her face. I hit the only thing I ever loved, the only thing that caused me such pain. Yet she turned to me, fear now wed to blind rage. So we tumbled down to the earth, in each other arms as in so many of my dreams, though her fists were making their way to my temple, time and time again. I seized her golden locks in my hand and fought back with my drunken hate, my own burning rage.

When someone pulled her off of me, I missed her closeness intensely as it was replaced with the mass of some random boy. She ran off and I screamed after her, "Are you scared now?" Yet I already knew the answer. I had told her so many times in my twisted, drunken nights, that I would show her fear. I gave her my word and I delivered.

Of course I was suspended from school for fighting. Then, because of my past at the school, I was expelled, not just from my school but my friends, my art, my future and the life I had come to know so very well. A few weeks later, I received another painful blow — a temporary restraining order! Sure, it was only good until the court date, but the idea that she hated me that much stung like salt on a fresh wound.

I went to court, and both my parents there to protect me, but it wasn't the judge that made me squirm. When she walked through the doors, my mouth grew dry, my heart beat fast, I could not think, I could not breathe. All I knew how to do was look at her, and, at that moment, all I could feel was a sickeningly sweet wave of love. We went before the judge. Then, as soon as she began to lie, a repulsion set in, so powerful that I suddenly hated her, as only a moment before I had loved her, with all of my being!

Then, when the judge issued the restraining order — my already bloodied, broken heart, shattered. I was in complete shock. It was if she had supernaturally plunged her bright manicured nails into my chest and ripped my heart from it, as if I lay there convulsing and dying in front of her, still speaking words of love, lines of poetic effulgence, until she kicked me finally to death.

Yet I showed none of these feelings. I simply played the part I was handed ... and planned for our future.

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Again let us begin with major props for your story-telling abilities. Your descriptions especially of emotional states are both poetic and enthralling. Yet twin themes of dysfunction have by this point in your story clearly appeared: (1) your addiction to alcohol stands like a shadow behind every problem in your intense relationship with the object of your desire; and (2) the volatility of your extreme emotional states allows love to transform into hate instantaneously, as you switch from the vulnerability of the former to the aggression of the latter in response to feeling hurt. Put the two together, and the alcohol problem stands twice as tall, for you first create your own pain (even if in Part One it was someone else's lie, the lie sprang from your involvement in alcohol abuse) as a corollary to your alcoholism (or, if you prefer, binge drinking). You will not be able to solve any other problems until you solve this one. You desperately need to become involved in AA's twelve step program and to take it as seriously as humanly possible. For it will also help you isolate and identify the part you play in this tragic mess — which is the only part over which you truly have power. Though your angry attack represented a pathological desire to exercise power over your lover, the power to induce fear in her, it is over the part you play that — sober — you will find the power to change your world. Thus far, for all the intensity of your love for her, your love of drink has trumped any chance of your finding reciprocity or happiness. Do you see your self-destructive cycle as clearly as you represent it on the page?*

It Was Her, Part Four: The Final Act

Officer Star came to my door. I'd known him quite a while. Young, healthy, buzz-cut — your average all-white suburban police officer.

Lying to him was easier than making four year olds believe in the boogy-man! I even went into the backyard and had a cigarette while my mom chatted with him. Everything was falling into place. Everyone was doing exactly as I'd predicted. I felt wonderful.

The next day, I wake up on time, shower, dress perfectly, blow-dry my hair, glossy lips and smoky eyes. In a way, I still look wonderful — I was gorgeous! It was the day I'd planned to die in front of her. My mom asked me what the occasion was. I lied as usual, and she believed me as usual. I grabbed the jacket my best friend had given me and walked outside to have a "smoke". Snatching my purse from the bush, heavy with tequila and pills, I ran like lightning in my red shoes — toward my friends, toward the school, toward my death, but most of all toward her!

I waited behind the school, my jacket cool against my hot skin. I drank down the pills with the burning elixir. Yet I thirsted for something more, I craved something better than tequila. And with the bell, I stood at the broken gate. I stood behind the dugout, having my lasts cigarette. The late bell rang, and I knew it was my time. I walked across the deserted campus toward the stage of which I had dreamt so many times, toward the friends I'd known for so very long, toward my enemy I did not know, toward her. I walked through the almost empty theater to make my presence known by all, even if seen by only a few.

Walking up to the stage, the lights, the curtains — everything was in place! Behind the curtains I went, to wait. My former teacher came and fetched me, gave me a remorseful look and began directing me to the office. That's when I saw her face, the horror in her eyes fed my strength. I was so close! So many tried to stop me, but my bleeding heart and drunken rage could not be stopped. I grinned like a demon as I flew through the students. She was right there! I looked her in the eye, her horror and fear helped me stand tall.

I knew I was sick, and she finally knew the truth — that I wouldn't stop. "Romeo and Juliet died for love ...," I said, just above a whisper, and I knew she heard me. Unknown hands groped for me, but I did not move, my strength too great for feeble hands. "... as will I by today's end, my pet," I continued in my stage whisper. Then with a sudden blow, an old friend brought me to the ground, but I was up so very quickly, throwing my apologies and my love, concealed in a white envelope, at her feet.

"Goodbye!" I roared with laughter as I began to stumble though I tried so hard to walk away. Once again I was knocked to the ground, but this time, I surrendered to the blackness that suddenly surrounded me. For a moment, as this physical darkness came over me, the darkness in my heart and my mind seemed to fade, and I thought I might not die — yet I hoped.

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** What a terrible tale of obsession and madness. Even as you realized you were sick, you continued, possessed by your sickness — alcohol-induced? Perhaps. Though by this time your addiction to the one and to the other, to alcohol and to her, were married in a single delusional pathology. Where were you in all this? Buried alive beneath your own delusional desire to die! Such is addiction: suicidal at its core always, though slower in some than others — a throwback to belief in demonic possession: why do you think they called alcohol, "spirits"? Dionysian Bacchanals of delirious fury are as old as the God of Wine and Delirium, and if you look about you here, you will see other acolytes from the inner city taking their various self-destructive and violently delirious poses, confusing self with the delusive power-driven force of addiction that would consume the vessel that feeds it — thanatos and eros married in a sudden explosion of ... diseased thought. Thank God this is but a history and you are in recovery, or, if you don't believe in God, then: thank mercy, pity, peace and love in human form — ideally, your own healthy and generous, honest self, born anew — she who was always meant to be loved by you: you!*

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

I Can Fix My Problems

At this point in my life I'm really trying to get my life together. I'm trying to work on myself and my attitude. I got problems in my life but I don't know how to fix them. I work on them every day trying new things to improve, but can't. I feel jail is the place to change them. This is a place where you can communicate with other people and change your perspective of life. I mean you might as well work on half of them here 'cause all you got is time.

People need to stop these kid games and find a life. You ain't no different from no one else, so stop proving yourself. Be your own character, find that role model that you went to be and stop looking up to these bad-ass cats that be doing bullshhh.

Me, I ain't perfect but I still got problems, and so what? I can fix them. If you can't tell the difference between a good life style and a bad one, it ain't yo' fault, but it still ain't no excuse. Check yourself before you wreck yourself.

-Alex U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's clear that your head is in the right place. It's too bad that your environment is not the right place — or at least not the easiest place — to make the kind of changes you know you have to make and want to make. What is the hardest thing about making those changes? What would be the most helpful thing you could get on the outs to bring those changes about? Knowledge is the beginning of wisdom, but it's only the beginning. What counts now is follow-through.

How It Feels To Be Locked Up

Now That's a topic!

Don't try it or think about it because it ain't cool. See this is the worst thing in the world to me personally. All I do is think about all the other positive things on the outs, I can be doing because that's all there is to do.

I feel like a caged animal, and to be honest I'd rather be dead than to do twenty-five-to-life. This is just the last place, and I mean, the last place I want to be. You gotta wear the next man's recycled draws and take showers and take a #2 with them also, and to top it off they tell you when to do it.

I never knew how much freedom really meant 'till I came to this hell hole. If I can tell someone else about this it would save a lot of people 'cause it just ain't where you want to be, I'm telling you. All I can do is think about what I wouldn't did and am going to do better. It's too much to say about being in jail man. Which your freedom took ain't nothing to smile or laugh about, period.

-Lil' Tonio – God's Child, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know, it doesn't surprise us that you wrote this piece. Here you are, facing a terrifying trial, struggling with the weight of a possible long term sentence, and at a time when a smaller person would be just thinking about their own pain, you are reaching out to others, saying "If I can tell someone about this it would save a lot of people." It shows that even this pain can't shrink your heart or take away from your desire to do better, and to be better. There many things that the system is controlling in your life right now, we can't deny that. But it's you who controls how much you hold on to your generosity and your human decency. As long as you hold on to that, and stick with it, you will be an inspiration to everyone who takes the time to know you. No matter where you are.

To My Big Bro Doing "Life" — Part Two

My brother, you were one of a kind! Ever since the system took you away from me, I haven't been the same. Losing you made me realize how messed up things can get. I have nothing to live for!

my big bro' locked up
for the rest of his life
plus i can't get right
the only person
i really love
is never gonna be
out with me
what more can happen
i love my big bro'
so much
i would take a slug
for him
he was like
a father to me
it wasn't his destiny
to be doing life
in the penitentiary
somebody
anybody
please tell me
this is all
just a dream
damn
this is messed up
now what i'm'a do
without you
remember you
always told me
if you get locked up
then you's slippin'
"let you tell it"
how could it be
the only person
who was loyal to me
is now doing life
in the penitentiary
i'm sitting here
with tears
in my eyes
wonderin' why

-Can't Get Right, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The same man who gave you love and taught you how to survive as a thug, didn't know when to quit — believe it could all be good so long as he didn't slip. But in the game, sooner or later it always ends the same: "life" or death. No one that's stayed ever survived unscathed. In the end, all that gain gets traded in for more pain than one man can sustain without faith that there's something more to life than a locked door — some higher meaning that explains what we're living for. Nothing can make it all okay, but there is a certain salvation in seeing through what you used to do so that others needn't end like you, or, rather — him! 'Cause it's not too late for you to begin again. Some claim they'll never change, but that's all life is — changes, without and within. If you can't keep up within, then you get stuck in a cage or an early grave — 'cause you had to change to maintain. But if you pay the wages of sin within, and change, you don't have to be the next "life"-or-death victim of the game.

Heartfelt

a hurt is nursed
a hate will burn
a pain only grows
a love is reborn
i want to cry
i want to die
i want to leave
us behind
a twisted girl lies
behind hazel eyes
a deceitful smile
blinding my mind
i want to let go
i want to be free
free from this deadly
addiction to thee
beneath golden lock
form twisted thoughts
beneath such gentle curves
a hate-filled heart burns
a heartfelt hate burns
a heartfelt hate burns

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ah, you do see the disease of addiction is located between the ears of the addict (in the addict's mind) and not located in, what shall we call it, the object of desire. A Spanish surrealist filmmaker, Luis Bunuel, late in life made "The Obscure Object of Desire", and, to his point, the young woman in the film who represented the object of desire, was portrayed by two different actresses — not twins by any means, though the film's audience in its own, what shall we call it, cinematic psychosis of desire all but universally failed to notice, caught up in a projected "dream"!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Mind

There has been lots of times that I wanted to speak my mind, but I didn't. Like what one of my peers said at court, you have a lot of stuff to say but you don't because, for some reason, you feel that nobody will understand but you. So, since I know The Beat cares, I'm going to explain to y'all. You guys can be the judge.

So let me speak my mind and say why I should not be in here. I should not be in here because I am better than this, and there are a lot of things I could be doing right now, like being a role model to my little cousin Zion aka Z-Man, showin' him the difference between right and wrong, and that the world will move with or without you.

So, you better make good moves that people will remember you by. So, when I get out I'm going to show that what I'm showing my cousin I can do myself. RIP Mom.

-Cuba U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a lot of passion in this piece, Cuba. We can tell how much you care for your little cousin — and how much he needs the role model that you could be. What are the good moves you're going to do to be remembered for, and what are you going to show your cousin?

It Was Her, Part Five: Today

I went to the "loony bin" for a suicide attempt. Then when my fifty-one/fifty was up, Officer Star came and got me — and brought me to this icy, juvenile hell.

People ask me what I did to get here, and I tell them, day after day, I fell in love with someone who hates me. People ask me if she was worth even ten minutes in here, and I reply, "No." — To me, it was worth my life at the time, and even now I would live my life in prison just to be near her once more. — Yet, because I am a thespian (actor/actress), they believe my lies, and within a week or two, I'll be free!

My plans will begin anew as Act Two starts up on the stage. Because I promised to always be there. Because I gave my life to her, in truth — even though sick and twisted truth it is. This pit is nothing compared to what I could do!

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We had hoped you were more advanced in your insight than the heroine whose tale you narrate. So long as you identify with what you call the "sick and twisted truth" — it is a lie disguised as you. Wake up to living your life for you! As we see it, it's the least that you could do. You feel? Your delusion is not real — it is addiction, even as you have revealed. And what you could do, is so much more than this sickness in you! Get right, and even this sad tale could be turned true — or you can lie to us, just like you lie to you.

Happy Thoughts

My happiest thoughts that never fail to make me smile, are remembering when I was there to see my first son take his first breath, and to hold him in my arms!

Sometimes at night, when I can't sleep, these thoughts of my son, make it easier for me finally to fall asleep, because it reduces a lot of the stress on my mind. And, yes, I'm planning to take care of him by any means necessary. No, that doesn't mean crime — it means I'll take whatever job there is that will help me support my son financially, however humble.

I don't end up as I am now, in some incarcerated facility doing time — I want nothing like this in his life! And that's my happiest thought.

-Sohail, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's ironic that the cause of your stress is being back in the Hall, and that you're back here because you ran from Camp to be there at the hospital for your happiest moment! We're so glad the judge decided to give you another chance at Camp. Now, this time, don't run — no matter what! You owe it to your son to do the right thing, no matter what.

Out Of The Nest Unable To Fly

Fear nothing, show no emotion, never let yo' guard down, trust no one, put yo'self first. Why? Because that is what we are taught and what I mean by "We" is young people today. But all these things do is leave you stuck in a box, isolated away from everything that the world has to offer. So, when the time comes for people to leave the nest, they can't fly and they end up stranded by themselves.

All of a sudden they want help, and the thing is, people are willing to help them now because if you even talk to some older cat, they'll say, "If people was telling me this when I was yo' age..." Yeah, that's what they say every time.

I talk to them all the time being in the halls all the time, but it seems like I never get the message, I guess because I fear nothing, show no emotion, never let my guard down, I trust no one, I put myself first, Why? Because that is what I was taught.

-Marky D U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is very well written, Marky. But we wonder if it's enough to fall back on what you were taught to justify behavior that always leads to the loss of your freedom. All of us grew up with lessons we believed were true, because we were just children when they were taught to us. But as we mature, we have to examine what we were taught to see if it is true, and to judge whether holding on to such beliefs is in our interests or not, whatever those who came before us might think. A famous song lyric goes: "We've got to be taught, before it's too late, to hate all the people our relatives hate." But as we mature, we can and should question whether those prejudices we were taught serve us or hurt us. Sooner or later, you will truly grow tired of giving away your precious freedom, and you will make some changes. The only question is, will these changes come in time to keep you from regretting some choice you made for years and years into the future, or will you grow tired of it in time to make changes now that will keep you free. Only time can answer that one.

Doing Time

court was looking shady
the judge tryin' to play me
he ain't givin' me another option
and there's no way i can stop him
when the judge says detained
anger flows through my veins
sitting in this hall
staring at these walls
wanting to go home
but knowin'
there aint no chance at all
my heart is always poundin'
stressin' off these
walls surroundin'
i feel powerless
without hope
but at the same time powerful
without dope
i wanna leave this place
and let my loved ones
see my face
i'm bout to get out and succeed
and be a legal "G"

-Young J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, despite all the stress, your clarity of mind, having left dope behind, has you blessed — 'cause you can clearly see the only way to stay out of this mess for the rest of your life. Take the heart, the courage of a G and make your money legally! Take that pride in the face of adversity, 'cause it can be more valuable than a degree from a university — if you can keep this clarity of mind, add deeds to your intention and leave the street grind behind as you refuse to lose and stay committed to this new direction you now know to choose. You need to do this time but this time doesn't need to do you! Most come in and leave twice the foo' when they're back on the street. Props! 'Cause you just beat the system and its cops.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

To My Big Brother Doing Life — Part Three

this is for my big bro'
why did you have to go
twenty-one years old
with a son and doing life
that ain't right
you named him after me
i asked you "why"
you said "because i
love you and when
i look at him
i see you"
at the time
i didn't really realize
how deep that was
but now i appreciate it
i told yo' baby'mama
"i'm willing to step up to the plate"
she told me "don't fake"
i said "maybe this is a mistake"
— naw this is the least
i could do for you after all
the things you did for me
i owe this to you
and to my nephew
my brotha it's a cold world
how could i tell this but
i think i'm in love with yo' girl
please forgive me
it all started on the way
she used to look in my eyes
and gave me them strong vibes
at least she not out there
selling her body for money drugs
she just need some love
to tell you the truth
she still not over you
i don't think she ever will be the same
one time she even called me your name
it's a shame i crossed you like this
if i had only one wish
i would change the past times
don't' let no female come between us
i hope i didn't lose your trust

-Can't Get Right, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now we see what you mean about "can't get right" — 'cause even when you do get right, some part of it all goes wrong. Well, yeah, nobody's perfect, that's for sure; yet being there for your nephew as a step-dad is not something bad. We can't speak for your friend like a brother or a dad, like just how mad or sad he will be or how long it will last before it's passed. But it's almost as if some mysterious part of himself already knew all this: naming the boy after you, like he's both your nephew and a "junior" too. Maybe in the back of his haunted mind, he knew where he was going and he tried to leave less wreckage behind than most do. We don't know that for a fact, but we know this: You need to change your life for the sakes of that lady and that kid — you can't go back to what you did. That boy can't lose two father's to the game, or that lady lose two lovers who both love her son the same. For that boy's sake, your brother's and your own, you've got to make that boy a safe and sane home, and the same goes for his mom. You better get right, and more than try with all your might, make it a "no matter what" you won't go back to the same game that mucked the man you call brother but love as a father, while you prove you can give that boy a better life than growing up without knowing wrong from right, or having to turn to the street to put love in his life! Whether your brother forgives you or not, be in it to win it, 'cause you're all that boy's got! And if he sees you and his mother love each other a lot, that's not a bad thing — so long as you keep doing the next right thing.

Winner

My life is like a basketball game and everybody but my family is on the opposite team. The cold part about it is that I can't trust nobody with the ball but me. I can't put my life in nobody else hands, not even my mom, my brother, or my cousins. It's like they there, but they can't help me. No one can. I got to make the right moves to win the game, the game of life.

Most people lose the game before they turn eighteen, but I got to win. I just have to prove to my family, my friends and the teachers that said that I could not win. And all the people that didn't have faith in me, that I can be successful and that I'm a winner.

-Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good that you've been able to find motivation in your situation. It's true, it is on you. However, don't let that shut down you down and not accept help when it's presented. We all need a helping hand every now and then, so don't let your pride get in the way. Especially if it'll help to get you in the position you want to be in!

My Sad Unfinished Puzzle

The piece in my life that I am constantly missing is me not having my mom and dad since I was 12. I am mad because I want to put those pieces in the puzzle. But I need help.

The other piece in the puzzle I am missing is me being there for my daughter and not wanting her to grow up thinking it's okay to do the stuff I did.

The other piece that I'm missing is me continuing to follow my dreams.

The biggest piece in my puzzle missing, is me not knowing my younger sibling and not having our mom around. It hurts so much because I am the oldest and I have to take care of my child and my sisters.

-Ke Ke, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those are a lot of missing pieces and also just a lot of responsibility for a very young woman like yourself. Not only do you have your own child but you have inherited the responsibility of your parents in raising your siblings. This is such an enormous responsibility that even an adult with a job and a house and everything that makes a life stable, would stress hard over it. So you're allowed to be stressed. For the absence of your parents, we're very sorry. We don't know what happened to them, but it's very painful to lose your parents at any age, let alone such a young one. The only advice we can give you, is ask for help. Ask everyone you can for help. There are programs and funding out there to help people like you, you just need someone to help you access them. You need an advocate, but it's hard to find one unless you ask.

Streets In My Head

Deep sorrow sweats drops full of untrust
No trust a group of friends give me a strong rush
Cold hearted in a soul of a beast
So much anger that I gotta release.
The power of a king stormin' the streets
I'm raised that if you don't grind, then you don't eat.
Creep the street day to night
Stand in the dark 'cause I can't stand the light
Money is the problems we face
You the young man and now there's haters wanna take yo' place
Stand on your feet also think smart
Hustle all day but at the end you gotta rest yo' heart
Heart stronger than a room full of ice
You gotta get money to buy life than raise the price
We got money to spend
But when you get it we always spend it wit' our friends
Time to open life and get things right
We deep in a hole and stuck, so fight
It's real dark and there's no light
All my power is gone, 'cause I'm dead with no might.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most terrifying danger is the kind that threatens the body as well as the soul. We read this feeling with a deep sense of horror, and you don't once mention bullets or fights or violence. Instead you capture the true violence, or as you call it, "real dark" of street life, which is the way it saps the spirit, bleeds the strongest hearts. Fortunately, by writing about it, you shine light on this darkness -- force others to see what you see, and we hope, see it yourself enough to never go back.

Unspoken Truth

When you want to talk the words come later,
feel like your mouth close so when you talk people call you hater.
Life is rough sometimes but you keep your silence
so when the pen let loose. be gangsta and start writing.
Let the world be your canvas, unleash the beast
'cause when it's all said done, I'm the one to feast,
and forget what's around me, I'm the last to blow.
I got a secret to tell, I'll be the last to go.
I been the first in line to speak rap and rhyme,
been writing forever, so it's about my time.
So if people wanna listen then I'm highly recommended.
My words is secluded, and secretly I'm gifted.

-Young QB U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Your words may be guarded, but your gifts are quite clear/As a rap rhyming writer, you've gotten our ear/We're left with one question, From The end to the start/And that is... Why unleash the beast, why not the heart?

Death Is Not An Option

Death comes easy to anyone who wants it. If you need to survive or stay alive, we all need to stick together and not die. About two years from now, I am going to join the Black Panthers. People in my family have been Panthers, and I want to keep the trait going.

People that know my life and what I've been through would know that I have the growth that is needed to go through the physical and mental pain. When I'm in the halls, I have people that are not black that wants to join, but they can't because they're not black. I tell them they can be anarchist and be an accomplice of the Black Panthers.

Most people need to be taught how their heritage was robbed for their traits. Death is not an option for me, so when I have my troops to take over, and make the world the realist equal place to live. The Panthers are a revolutionary group that fought for the rights of blacks. We need to do what we was put on this earth to do, and that's to obey God and everyone would be equal. BLACK Power!

-Nick Beam U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love the idea that you are committed to the principle "to make the world the realist equal place to live." If everyone was dedicated to that principle, the world would be a lot better than it is now. We remember the Black Panthers, and we know their first responsibility was not to assemble troops, but to feed hungry bellies and hungry minds. That is a noble goal!

Lockdown Breakdown

The first couple days, it's pretty bad.
You feel secluded from the world.
The judge labels you
a menace to society and sends you to max unit.
Then the chances of you getting out are very slim.
Every day you wake up and hate yourself
because you know you gonna wake up in the same
place the next day.
Court date after court date,
month after month,
you start to get irritated by everything.
Every night you just ponder the thought of what you
would have done different,
but it's too late you and you got to pay your dues and
give years of your life away,
for some people, they gonna spend the rest of their
lives behind these walls.
So for the youngsters: stay out and be out, 'cause
this ain't the life to live.

-T-Bone Nguyen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The picture you paint is nightmarish – we hope that somewhere someone reads this and decides to heed your advice. Do you think if you'd read this when you were still on the outs, it might have had an impact on how you lived? Or would you have just ignored it? What would it take to reach out to others who may be headed towards this place, and convince them that like you say so elegantly, "This ain't the life to live"?

The Panthers are a revolutionary group that fought for the rights of blacks.

How Would You Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know

I would tell them that I lost my freedom because I have to follow rule from a wanna-be cop. Also, I have to raise my hand to get up, use the bathroom, throw something away, get some water, and ask a question.

Also, I am getting lighter skin color because I haven't got no sunlight. I have to wake up when they tell me to. The only way I can get some sunlight is if I work in crew to clean up. I can put the mop in the courtyard to dry. In the courtyard, it really small, so we don't go outside. Instead, we go to the gym to play basketball, football, or work our ass off by the staff, if they in a bad mood. The food be the same every week, so I don't have no choice to eat anything else.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If we were reading this before we ever came here, we sure wouldn't want to come! This is a well-written piece describing what it's like to hand your freedom over to strangers who can't care about you as much as you should be caring about yourself. We think the most important thing you can bring to the table when making choices that affect your freedom is your attitude, your state-of-mind, and your courage to carry through.

Beat Within

What's up Beat. It's the number one tease for ya! Writin' to y'all for what I hope to be the last time. I been in juvie two times, and that's two times too many! Ya feel?

Well I go to court tomorrow, but probably won't be able to go home! It sucks to know I (unlike many others) actually have a family, but can't go home to them. See... this system gots me twisted for real! Once your name's in the computers and a P-O's been assigned, your adolescence get kidnapped. The county gets paid for every day we're locked up. Therefore they put us on almost impossible probation. It's like they set us up for failure and take advantage of our youth and voiceless opinion.

Well I'm about to turn seventeen and then only gots a year before I can legally make a difference in this twisted system. And please trust I will make a difference!

Well keep your head up. And remember, pimp the system, don't let tha system pimp you!

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Truer words never said! We hope you'll take all that anger and frustration at the system and really will make a difference, get active, vote. But you know what? If you're really committed to it, you can make a big difference in how other people vote too. You can work in your community to change things on a political level. The system isn't independent; it's locked into a bigger system, a political system. Make it your business to figure that shhh out!

Life On the Line(s)

can't think, can't breathe
my mind has closed
getting harder everyday
to keep control
but i must last
'till the end of this mess
just trying to move on
grow up and keep up
can't give up
tomorrow's never promised
and i need to last
one more day
one more moment
one more song
one more heartfelt line
with nowhere to run
we gotta face our realities
with nothing left
to say
with nothing left
to write
with nothing left
to sing
with nothing left
of me
but these
romantic
lines

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Was it St. John of the Cross who tossed off those immortal lines about the dark night of the soul, the deepest despair where all is lost and there's nothing to hold? It was a Jewish mystic who claimed it reduces us to all heart and no name, where there is no map, no path, no way out of the pain — so we are forced within and slowly feel our way back to life again. No legs to walk, no mouth to talk, we are born again, this time to ourselves; and the white noise of darkness quells and we begin to let the light, the love we lost seep in, till like a baby born without sin, we open our eyes to see heartfelt soul in everything.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Dream Or Nightmare

Is it a dream when you want the finer things in life? Is it a dream when the finer is a risk to death or jail? I want to know why when I think of shoot guns, robbery, having money, and drugs are a dream when I'm taking a risk that will in the end it will be bad. My life looks like a dream but I always seem to make it come out as a nightmare. Death, jail, bullets, guns, 'ho's, jewels, cars, money and power.

I don't understand why people take the risk when they want the outcome. But I really don't understand why I'm still gonna take the risk. Maybe 'cause this what I love to do. To everyone that have nightmare and think it's a dream, find peace within yourself 'cause once you find peace within yourself all the nightmares end. Just like evil lurks on every street, so a legit dream and legit life. Life can get vex so work things out and get on with life. I'm gone. Stay safe and solid.

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say you're willing to take the risk (of losing your freedom again, or your ability to walk, or your life) because it's what "you love." But we think it's what you fear that drives you... You are afraid of trying to put your mind to better uses because that is unfamiliar territory. You are afraid of giving up what is so comfortable to try something that may require some courage you lack or some effort you don't want to put forward. But we can promise you that the fear of the unknown is almost always worse than the fact, so we urge you to put your feet down on a different path, one that leads away from lock-up and not toward it. You can never find peace within yourself by disturbing the peace of others. It just doesn't work that way. Think long and hard about that legit dream and legit life that you know can get you all those "things" you dream about having without all those consequences you're now living.

To Martya

You plus me are none other
You're my wife and my lover
You came into my life 'cause you're brother
Even though I'm locked up, I see you every day
Even though we are far away
Far apart but you're far in my heart
I knew you were mine from the start
You help me improve in some things I do
You're solid, true, loyal, that why I wanted you
'Cause when I see you I see me
Same person heart, mind, and soul but different identity
You're brother really didn't approve of us
When I told him I like you all he did is cuss
But we're still together and that's forever
'Cause bird of a feather flock together
You'll die for me and I'll die for you
But that not what I want to do
Live your life no matter what go down
'Cause in your heat I will always be
In your heart even though you can't see
Life or death, I'm not going to change
You know well as I know death is my range
Make your choice wise
You never know what lie in my life
Life moves on
S I hope you move on too
Remember I love you

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We wish you would reconsider your declaration: "Life or death, I'm not going to change." Change is a 100% certainty in all our lives. The only question about it is whether you bring the changes you want in your life, or whether you allow others (like the system) to bring changes you don't want in your life. The fact that you are telling this girl to move on shows us how deeply you love her, because you are willing to let her go rather than ask her to stay by the side of someone who doesn't care that much about his life. So, how can you learn to love yourself as much as you love her?

Never Sad

What's up Beat? Today topic is about how I'm never sad.

Every day my life go by, I ask myself why am I never sad. Through some of the most tragic times in my life I never get sad. So I ask myself, is there something wrong with my emotion? Do I need to see a therapist? Am I crazy?

I also think there something wrong with me 'cause I been to plenty funerals and was never sad, but always mad. To me I'm just a everyday ninja. I think just like everyone else. Everyone tell me how kind, smart, angry, and militant, but they don't know what goes in the inside. They don't know what lurks around in my head or how I emotionally feel at the time, so they think I'm happy or either sad. And that how my life go. I'm gone, stay safe and solid.

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't think you're crazy, but we think you have built an emotional cushion to protect yourself from the pain that's all around you. It's a very common thing to do in the circumstances that you're living. Some people do it with drugs or alcohol, others just let their brains build in the protection they need. You know, TM, no one ever really knows what "lurks around" in anyone's head, often not even the person where the lurking is going on. We think you are burying emotions as deeply as you can for fear of them pouring out of you one day without your ability to control them. We don't know if you should see a therapist or not, but we do want to say that talking to someone about the things that go on in your head could help you a lot, whether it's a therapist, a counselor, a teacher, or just an adult that you trust.

Boy Or Man

I want to know the difference between a teenage boy and man, 'cause to me, I'm a man. Some people say it's the maturity. But I know teenage boys who are more mature than men. Then again some say it's the experience, but some men don't go through what us teenagers do.

Well then, some think maybe it's the wisdom, but once again I know more teenage boy who are wiser than some men. Maybe we don't pay our own car note, mortgage bill, house bill, and food for the house, but some of us teenage boys help to do what we can.

More men go to jail than teenage boys, so why are we label a boy or just a child. To me all men are equal 'cause we all mostly think alike. We all act on our emotion. We all go for what we know.

Another thing that gets me is that the juvenile court can try us as an adult, but after it all said and done, we're still label a boy. Why I have no idea. So until I find out I'm gone stay safe.

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You did some thinking to come up with this, and we always appreciate thinking. But here's what we think. You're right that more men go to prison than boys go to juvenile hall, but what we think marks the difference between childhood and adulthood is knowing the consequences for our actions, and being ready to accept them. The comparison we wish you were making is this: more adult men stay out of prison than go, and more boys stay out of juvenile hall than go. In many cases, that's just because they have better (richer) circumstances. But in many other cases, it's because they have that adult maturity to see what leads to consequences they want to avoid (like jail), and matching their behavior to the consequences they want. We have the feeling that as you get older, your definition of what passes for wisdom might change somewhat. As for being labeled a boy even after you're tried as a man, we think you're absolutely right, and in that respect, we think the system is as immature and irresponsible as the most irresponsible child in it!

I Want To Cry

Sometimes I just want to cry, but I can't. It seem like I gotta break down, but my mind won't let me. Out of everything that happen this past year, I shed not one tear. After Cell, Dave, Ant, Ron Ron, and Scooter die, still no tears.

I'm my mind everything will get better, but it don't, and I strive even harder but get the same result. My life is hard but still no tears. I cry by anger and I want it to stop. But hopefully it will when a tear drop. I'm gone.

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Our response is the same as to your other piece about not feeling emotions. We think you're afraid to let all those tears that you've stuffed down deep inside from pouring out of you. We understand that feeling, but we repeat that finding someone to talk about those feelings with would be very helpful, whether it leads to tears or not. You are clearly a feeling person, and no feeling person is without emotion. Getting in touch with that emotion can be very scary, but in the end, it pays big dividends.

Who I'm Mad At

I'm mad at the world, mad at ya girl,
mad at crack cocaine, and I'm made da furl,
I'm mad at the kids, man, but it's not they fault
they spend year being locked up trapped in a vault.
I'm gonna fall but I'm gonna rise,
I might be mad at the world but it' sin my eyes.
I'm the beholder life is a boulder,
and it's full hard times lookin' over ya shoulder.
So I'm mad at who mad at me.
I'm mad at a lot, man, it's not for free.
Being mad cost a lot but be cool 'cause it might be ya freedom,
if you got a lil' army, be cool and go and lead 'em.
Being mad can cost your life so be so givin'.
Give your all and be calm and enjoy livin'.

-Young QB U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are some fine rhymes in this poem, but also some mixed messages. You end by advising people to be calm, especially because being mad carries with it some serious costs (like your freedom). But you also list many things that you're mad at, so how are you applying your own excellent advice to your life?

Sorry Peeps

Man, all I know is I'm really sorry, mom and pops. I know I let y'all down and made y'all sad. Pops, I'm really sorry about coming back here and I know I let you down, 'cause when I first came home I told you that I'll stay out of trouble and never get locked up again. I told you I was a man of my words.

And moms, I told you that I never make you cry again but I did. I'm very sorry, and I hope you and pops can forgive me. This even goes to my little brothers and my little sister. I'm telling y'all this little bra and sis, I'm sorry I was never there to pick y'all from school. I'm sorry for not being an older brother. Sorry mom, Pops, and my lil 'bra and sis.

-Young Gunna U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It takes some maturity to stand up and take responsibility, which begins with acknowledging those you've hurt and being sorry for it. We know your sincere apology will be felt and accepted by your family. But your little sister and brother need more than your apology, they need you to guide them by the actions you take, which they will follow. When you get out of this situation, go home and be the brother they need, and the son your parents deserve. Young "gunnas" seldom get to grow old. Don't let yourself down.

An Accomplishment I'm Proud of...

An accomplishment that I'm proud of is my graduating from middle school. I'm proud of this because during those years I was failing towards the end of each year. I was overwhelmed with work. The end result was me graduating from middle school. Now I need to work on high school.

-Jungle U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have every reason to feel proud of this accomplishment. Now, use that pride to move yourself forward, past this bump in the road, and towards high school graduation and beyond!

Don't Be A Statistic

Being locked up ain't nice. Worried about your family and my brother being locked, stressing over these lil' ass kids in here and shh. People telling you what to do, wearing the same color every day, can't take a long shower, the nasty-ass food, them telling you when to come out.

Worried about court and what's gonna happen when I could be out there working, helping moms, putting money on my brother's book. I'm missing that. Instead, I'm in here fighting this feeling and case, getting sent to YA or Colorado, getting charged as an adult or juvenile, getting attempted murder again, reading and seating, working out and sleeping. That's all you do every day.

My thinking, my mentality is different. I got a whole lot to lose. I'm in here putting money on these cops and juvenile hall money, when I could put that money in my pocket and fam. It ain't nice being in here, and it ain't nice being in adult jail neither. Yeah, you ain't missing nothing, but you are missing your fam and what you could've done when you were out there, something positive, 'cause fo' real, your homies ain't putting money in your pockets or help your moms.

So stop repeating the same shhh, and help your family. Stop repeating the same life. Take it back. To myself, us young folks got a lot of potential. We better stop acting like one shoe size, and step our game up and be somebody, not a statistic. Help oneself and family.

-Herrors U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You give yourself and everyone locked up some excellent advice. But just telling yourself to stop repeating the same mistakes isn't enough. (If it was, you wouldn't be here.) So what is your plan for truly stepping your game up, and avoiding the things you know will always bring the same consequences?

Be My Valentine

I think love is a matter of deeds and words. You can say it a billion times, but how is the other person gonna know if you mean it, or if it's just words?

Guys, in my point of view, say whatever they need to say whatever they need to say to get what they want. Love is free, it isn't controlling. If I had a ninja, I would want him to show me through actins. He needs to prove himself that his love for me is real. Anyone can say them three words. It ain't hard to say it, but proving it is a challenge. If a ninja really loves a girl, he'll face the challenge to prove it to her.

In the Bible, it says: "Love is patient. It is kind. It does not envy. It rejoices through faith, honesty and hope." Love can be unconditional, or it can not. In my view, it's hard to real show someone that you love 'im, but if you really truly in love with someone, it can overcome obstacles or anything that gets in its way.

I thought this ninja loved me, but I realized it could've been just infatuation. If he loved me, he wouldn't abuse me and hit me like he did. Love is not abusive. It can overcome anything if you let it.

But me? A ninja really needs to prove his love for me to believe it. I been through so many relationships, I know what's real and what ain't. Truth.

-CeCe U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think that most of the young men (and old men) you meet will fall into that category of telling a girl anything they think they want to hear to get what they want. But the one thing you didn't talk about in this piece was how a girl proves her love in more than just words. Boys aren't the only ones who sometimes say things that they can't back up with action.

On My Way To...

'S'up with it, Beat? Well, just here in Unit 6, waiting to do my time. I am about to go to court for my disposition court, and it's going to tell me where I am going to do my time, like the Ranch, Glen Mills and group home.

I think I am going to the Ranch because of my charges, and my PO wants me to go there. Also, I ain't going to be stupid and run from no program. Just do my program and get it over with. Also, if I run From The program that just going to add more time.

-Kwes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for knowing that running only postpones things, it doesn't resolve them. But we worry when we read the phrase "do my time" and "do my program," as if there is nothing you can gain from this experience, so you're just going to do what you have to. Even if it's not what you wanted to happen, we hope you make the most out of the opportunity by taking advantage of whatever is offered to make you stronger, smarter and better able to care for yourself — and to stay free.

Thinkin'

I'm sittin' down
On this juvenile bed,
Got so many thoughts
Going through my head
Mom... money... freedom...
Drugs... my clothes... my life
I'm wondering what a few years from now
would look like...
I hope I still won't be stuck in the system...
I wanna go home and be with my family
'cause I really do miss 'em..
I think I need a boyfriend
'cause I feel hella lonely...
Or maybe I need a best friend,
That a be there for me...
But the best thing would be
For me to stay to myself,
but I'm doing kinda bad
so I'ma need somebody's help...
These are just some thoughts
that were runnin' through my mind,
so I guess I'll think some more
and write some other time!
Thanks for listening to my thoughts.

-Paradise U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You do need a best friend, honest and true/But that best friend best be you/"Hopin'" is not enough so you don't get stuck/ And it's not just fate and it's not just luck/You are the master of your own strong ship/Make your journey a worthwhile trip.

Who I Am Mad At

I am mad at myself because I am putting my family through this with me. I am mad that I keep coming up here. Then they come to my court dates. They keep coming to see me. I am mad at myself because I got myself in trouble. I mad at myself because I could do better and get a job and stay away from trouble.

When I get out, I am goin' to stay out of trouble so I don't have to be mad at myself. Then my family don't got to come up here to see me in the courtroom. I don't got to see my family go through this with me, and my lil' sister and my lil' brother and grandma crying in the courtroom. I am out y'all.

-Young-JT U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You clearly want to get back to that loving and supportive family, but you have to do more than just want to be home. You have to be willing to sacrifice some of the things you like doing so that you don't get taken from them again. What will you give up so that you can have your family?

Something To Say

One time I had something to say and I couldn't say it. When the time came was when I was gonna tell my best friend that I messed with his sister. It was hard for me to even think about telling him, but I thought it through a lot. And when I confronted him about telling him, I just forgot what I was gonna tell him.

I thought about it while he was in front of me, and I thought about what his reactions would be I thought about if he would get mad and never talk to me again or he would be like, "Better you than anyone else." So I really kept it to myself but I think when I get out I will tell him.

-Young Jokes U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't think you "just forgot" what you were going to say, you felt bad about what you did and that made it hard to say what you wanted to say. Did you just mess with her because you could, or because you care about her? If we were her brother, the answer to that question would be very important to us. Our advice: If you have trouble telling your best friend about something you did, you probably shouldn't have done it.

Telling Someone Who Doesn't Know

Describing being locked up is not hard for somebody who has been locked up before. In the mornings, imagine waking up early in the morning, around seven o'clock, even if you don't ant to get out of a warm bed to get your hygiene bag.

And then the food you eat ain't like the food you could eat on the outs. Instead, you got to eat the food they send to your unit, bad or not. Then you have to go to school, even if you don't feel like it. But the thing that'll really make you not want to come here is having to follow other people's orders.

So, if you've never came here before. All I got to say is don't ever come here. This is somewhere you don't want to come.

-Young Meel U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If someone had told you these things before you came here, would it have kept you free? If you didn't already know these things before you got here, then what did you think juvenile hall was like?

A Chance To Share My Experience

If I had a chance to tell someone about being locked up and share my experience with them, I would tell them that I wake up every day at 6:00, brush my teeth, wash my face and sit in my room for about 30 minutes. Then I eat breakfast, go to school. From 8:30 to 2:30 I'm in school, not to mention I don't learn shhh. Teachers don't teach us shhh! They just here fo' the pay, well some of them.

I basically chill the rest of the day. If you notice, I say "I" instead of we, even though 23 other people in here. I tell like I'm by myself, but most of these staff don't give a damn about you. At any given time they can play you and most cats in here front like me. I get mad when I here cats tell lies an' shhh, but if you ain't been here "DON"T COME!" It ain't the place to be. You can't do shhh; yo' freedom is stripped away.

-Marky-D U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a good description of what it's like on the daily, and why anybody who has a choice should choose to stay out of here! Is this the first time you've been here, or did you know the consequences before you did whatever it was that brought you here? We hope you're truly tired of coming here, so you'll stop coming here!

All My Fault

out of all encounters i've had and things i have seen and done
i am mad at myself the most
i can't see myself forgiving myself
because of all the pain and suffering i cost
i am mad at myself because
i did things that hurt other people and even my family
a lot of adults say it's the parents' fault that their kids are bad
but for me it is all my fault
and i'm the one to blame for all the suffering and pain
all the adults think they're good and they always do the right thing
but when someone's son does bad or goes to the hall
the other parents talk behind your family's back like little kids
putting us down and putting my family to the lowest of the low
i know the things i've done are bad and i blame myself
i wish i could blame somebody else
but i know everything is all my fault

-Victor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you realize that you're the one responsible for the things you've done and for being where you are now, there is a silver lining to that dark cloud: If you had the power to do this, then you have the power to change this. It's all up to you. Don't get too lost in blaming yourself, 'cause the most important part is reclaiming yourself and your family's good name. Put your pain to gain by learning your lesson and claiming your blessing.

Pieces To The Puzzle

Half my heart is missing since I started
I knew people who came, close friends departed
Family ain't turned their back just yet
Still live to the fullest, have no regrets
Puzzle ain't complete 'till the last piece is put in place
Like a shoe ain't complete 'till I tie the lace
The last piece is my death, the ending
I'll let it come in stride, no defending
Hope it comes peaceful in my sleep
Hope it don't make my family weep
So complicated, can't take it at times
Like a writer's block while writing rhymes.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Along the way we all lose some things, but we can, if we choose, fill that void with something else that's meaningful. This, hopefully, is just momentary for you and you can continue to acquire pieces that will complete your life/puzzle. From hearing your thoughts and your words, we believe you're working on a masterpiece!

Out Tonight

silence rings in his ears
as he waits for sirens to sing
the cool night air caresses him
bringing sweet lullabies closer
mind and chest ablaze
with such a deadly flame
each breath ripping his throat
no remorse, no regret
black leather whips at his heels
shadows cast by street lamps
cannot frighten that bleeding heart
always waiting, always watching
always left wanting and wishing
craving something more
out of reach of grasping fingers
darkness becomes a home
neither seen nor heard yet known
by the sinister moonlight
— your stalker's out tonight

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a dark and threatening poem, the meaning of which glistens like water in moonlight. Where does poetic meaning find its final home, in the author's intention or the reader's response? Or is it some meeting of minds at meaning's font that like Pegasus' hoof in Greek myth striking dirt brought forth inspiration from below the earth? So, our interpretation: there is a self-destructive urge, a twisted form of eros, flirts with imminent disaster, making stalking popo into heroes.

Black Thoughts

I can't stop this disease I have for committing crimes.
I can't stop this war that goes on throughout California
between us gang-bangin' brown teens.
I can't stop this segregation that goes on throughout the United States,
I can't stop killings that happen between other teens on other streets by any means.
So what can I do? Just kick back and watch the world fall apart. Yeah, and wait for my time to leave this planet we all call earth.

-Black, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Or you can join those of us who come here every week with another issue of The Beat, working hard so that others can speak out against what you say you can't stop. We say whatever others choose to do, you can choose to be part of the solution or part of the pollution. Why watch like a mark when you could be doing your part in the mental fight to end this senseless fight. Fashion compassion from lost innocence and show some heart. Don't neglect your intellect and let the mental wars start to save lives — one at at a time, starting with the one you call, "Mine."

Happy Thoughts

What makes me smile the most is Jesus Christ!
When I'm feeling low and sad, I pray to Him and He fills my spirit up with joy. When I'm in my room
looking at four walls, a sink, a toilet and a window
I can't see out of, that I'm in 23 hours, 7 days a week,
I read my bible and pray to Him. And He brings me joy.
Even when I'm at home watching TV,
watching a funny show, when I think about Jesus,
He puts a bigger smile on my face.

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing what makes you happy! So what makes you sad, or frustrated? What do you think makes you do the things you do to get incarcerated? Have you ever spent the time to think about this last question? We believe there's assistance in helping us deal with our problems, but the action part of it comes down to us. Do you hear where we're coming from?

Happy Thoughts Are...

Happy thoughts are when you are home and not in the hall.
Happy thoughts are when you are with your family at home, laughing and smiling.
Happy thoughts are going to your boy's house and smoking and drinking.
Happy thoughts are going to a girl's house and having a good time. Happy thoughts are going to a b-ball game and playing on a team. Happy thoughts are getting a home cooked meal by your mom. Happy thoughts are getting good grades.
Happy thoughts are going to college.
Happy thoughts are going to the NBA, or to the NFL.
Those are some of my happy thoughts about life.

-Donte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those all sound valid, since it's what makes you "happy." The one about going "to your boy's house" however, may have an impact on your probation and staying out in order to be "happy." What do you think?

This Money

The money come fast so that's how I spend it
Truck sounding like it got a marching band in it
I ain't gone even sit here
and tell you that drug money ain't good money
'Cause money is money
But I ain't gon' say what I do is right (sell drugs)
But at the same time, it can't be that bad
When you got Cannibus Clubs doing the same thing
I mean I been doing this stuff just a little bit
Before the World Trade Center's dropped
So I say it was about 2000 when I started grinding
And '04 when I started grinding hard
But ninja this runs through my blood
My cousin's been doing this
Got down with some of the big cats
So that takes me back to what I said
I know the game
So the only reason I go to jail
Is because I ain't paying taxes
The government don't like that
You got all these cats selling dope making a lot of money
And he ain't getting none of it
So if I was breaking bread with the government
Everything would be cool.

-That Ninja, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can justify a lot of what we do by saying, "look at that person, they're doing the same thing." Hopefully this isn't the life you've chosen for yourself. You may have seen some of the materialistic things that come with that lifestyle. But not everyone actually reaches that status. And how about the jail time, deaths, loss of family members, hurt family members, etc? The government will be the government. You may not be "paying taxes," but the government is getting it in other ways from you. Have you ever thought about that?

Rainbow

l-o-l lesbo dyke
ha-ha ugly bizz
is that all you really have to say
big deal i'm gay
that's right
rainbow gang
all the damn way
so go ahead and continue
your spiteful ways
'cause at the end of the day
it might be your girlfriend
in my big bed
doin' it for love
instead'a forty dollars a head
come on try to mess with this
'cause y'all ain't prepared
for my insanity
bring it on you homophobe
hate on my humanity
then taste my killer rainbow
poison your fake vanity

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Change it back if you don't like the changes we made, trying to replace the rhyme you cut at our suggestion... and maybe getting carried away with our impression of an argument that needs to be made to these wannabe-pimping-a-hoe player boys making all their dehumanizing sexist noise.

Dear Rabouin High School, New Orleans, Louisiana

Hi, my name is Melilena. I can relate to how all of you feel because my grandma and I are from New Orleans, and our house was destroyed also. But we've been in California for thirteen plus years.

Yes, we heard from our families. They all moved to Baton Rouge. So maybe when I turn eighteen years old, in a couple years, I will have to come meet the people that don't judge the way I talk. Say mean things about how my house was destroyed, etc.

I love you all and would hope to hear from all of you again someday. I drew you a picture to show my thanks to all. Everybody give thanks to The Beat Within for everything they've done for us all.

Did you hear about people moving to another part of Louisiana? I did see you. I have to write my family and see how they are doing. Let the Lord be with us at all times. He's watching over all of us children to keep us safe. Believe!

-Melilena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Our thoughts are with all those affected by Katrina. We "believe" that the people, in time, will recover from what happened. Some people comment on things they have no idea about some times. Don't let affect you. What's happened hits home with you because you still have family there. We hope that they are well. It may be nice for you to go back and visit. Imagine how it may look after they rebuild? Do you think it will look the same, or different? Can you describe what it's like back there for those who may not know?

Life Decisions, Past and Present

Sometimes I wonder why I chose this life. Every time I sit down and think I come up with the same thang; I always seem to come up with the same answer. I just looked up to all the wrong people as role models.

When I saw all the neighborhood drug dealers driving nice cars and having all the girls, I wanted that. I had the chance to play football and possibly go somewhere, but I chose to post all day so I could be like the people I looked up to.

Now that I really got a taste of how this life is, I see that it ain't worth a damn! Every time I put some real shhh together, these fake ninjas come through on some hating shhh.

So, now I've come to the decision that it's time for me to take another route. I've done the bad and continued to get the same-ax results. I'm going to do the good now and see where it goes.

-New route, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The Hall is so full of haters hating on anyone who wants to change his life, it makes the haters jealous of a big baller look like cheer leaders! So we understand why you don't put your name on this piece. We urge you to make up a pseudonym, a Beat name that no one will recognize outside the pages of The Beat — and keep coming with all this truth that burns through the lies of the street with straight-up honesty.

Broken Hand

What's up Beat? This is Grim, I want to say what's up to all locked up.

Man it sucks up here at Camp because I can't do anything for a while, I broke my middle finger and sprained the rest. I can't do push-ups, play video games or even play handball. It gets boring up here too, doing the same thing over and over again. Well that's all for now, so stay safe in the Hall.

-Grim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We just had to give you a standout for this because of the effort and dedication it took to write this piece with your left hand after hurting your right. That kind of love for The Beat and for keeping the lines of communication open with Beat readers, even when it's hard to do -- that deserves props.

Happy Thoughts

What makes me smile? Well, a lot of things make me smile! Like seeing my girlfriend on the outs, it makes me smile just at the sight of her beautiful face. Also every time I think about her, I'm happy, and the presence of her in my heart, just opens my heart up.

There are also other things that make me smile, like getting up in the morning and putting the first foot on my skateboard: it's just pushing me on the sidewalk, making me just wanna flip that thing in the air with a three hundred and sixty degree spin. It's called a three hundred and sixty degree flip, and it's one of my favorite tricks!

I'm gonna talk more about skateboarding because all people talk about in here is other stuff. So, when I am skating with my friends, it's just amazing, because the way people move the board and flip it and make it stick to their feet, it's cool! But, anyways, grinding is fun, too, because sliding on a ledge for a couple of seconds in a position that many people think is impossible is just so cool.

So, with the future of skateboarding, you can only get better if you keep trying — unless you break an ankle or something. Anyways, my name is Alex, and I'm just another skater on the street, trying to make it! Peace out, Beat.

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We remember the cover of a Beat issue a few years ago, with a stick figure demonstrating exactly what "grinding" is, like in a flip book, but we had to imagine the flipping (motion). Yeah, skateboarding is pretty cool, doing things that look impossible, and then you just keep rolling along! Very cool, indeed. But now, does a skater life style mean you have to do drugs and break laws and get in trouble ... or not. Can you skate and live straight, or at least within the law? Or does the high-risk push you to put your life and freedom at risk, too? Slangers and bangers used to be separate things, likewise graph crews. What about skateboarders?

... when I am skating with my friends, it's just amazing, because the way people move the board and flip it and make it stick to their feet, it's cool!

Riders On the Storm

i was born
in a hot
sunny storm
where the minorities
went from weak-minded
to getting strong
and it seems life is torn
schools without playgrounds
kids without smiles but frowns
compounded when daddy found
another excuse not to come around
streets were calling
visions of homies balling
posting it on the corner with the oh-gees
lacing me
up with game
how all of this gangbanging came
from rival gangs
that started runnin' thangs
from the pen
late-night hustlin'
readjustin' to gun bustin'
children strugglin'
in the ghetto projects known as
the home of a gangstas
in the fast lane we gotta
make bread and extra butter
even as a youngsta
gotta keep my thang tucked in
after getting convinced
to carry gats
cats get killed if they rat
smoking purple bags
watching for the taz
[to be continued]

-Flaco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A tropical storm hit California hard when the Mexicans behind bars won the dope trade from the Italian "made men" — and then split again into warring camps. But even it wasn't north versus south, homies killing homies would still come about, doing dirt to the next turf 'cause dope game is all about pain and profit, getting it from who got it and paying back in kind — even if in prison the unity of each side became a state of mind, outside in the wild West, any gangster code always came second best to the scandalous ways of survival of the sickest, where doing time for someone else hits with a quickness that's more vicious than snitching would have been, 'cause that stayed the cardinal sin. The best way out was not to begin, and the next way requires you to stand alone — and if you survive, you get a real family and a real home and the real freedom of being able to roam without a prison guard's bullet threatening to explode your dome. So when you continue this song, we hope you can point the right direction for a world gone wrong. It's not easy but it's simple: Raise your children to a better style of living, without hating or killing people.

It's Daddy's Duty

When I get out on the twenty-sixth of February, I will get married to my wife, and I will take care of my son, lil' Carl!

I was happy to see my son on Saturday. He was walking to me and saying, "Daddy!" And I talked to my wife and my mom on Saturday. My mom told me that I had to change my life and stay out of jail in order to take care of my son the right way.

She is right. I am eighteen years old now, and I need to step up my game to the max! That means I need to live my life the right way and get me a job and stay out of trouble! Life is too short to waste Carl— so God, please, watch of my family and me.

-Carl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you're home reading this piece you wrote and remembering your promise to your son and your mother — to live your life the right way. What are the pitfalls out there? Drugs and alcohol? Old friends? Fast money? Did you get that job? Did you go back to the mob?

I Stay Getting Active

Never holding it in
Always gone speak my mind
Never shake hands and pretend
I'm a speak what's been thought
Also demonstrate what's been taught
I'm a prime example of one who won't get lost
Individual won't get caught
But why do it at all
Might be gentle to the judge
Innocent to you all
Everyone deserves a chance
Take it how you want it either get wit' it or fall
Time is up.

-Stewart, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece. We hope you really are one of the ones who won't get lost—we wish their were more of you out there. How do you plan to "get wit it" so that you don't fall? You should keep writing, that's for sure.

One More Day in This Prison

What's up, here I am – one more week.
I spend the days thinking of my family,
Thinking of my little girl
And how I'm missing the most beautiful moments of her life
Really, all I want is to be with my daughter
To take care of her
Protect her
Be there for her when she needs me
I pray to God to give me a chance to return to her
And never separate myself form her again.
No one knows what will happen in my life.
My life is in the hands of the judge
But in my heart
I know
That I am in the hands of God.
Dedicated to all those who are locked up.
Have faith in God, because he is the only one who is with us.

-Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You did not write this as a poem, but you wrote it with such heart and simple love that it felt like a poem – or a prayer – as we read it. We hope your daughter one day learns how much her father loves her, and how much goodness there is inside you. In the meantime, we hope that others in your situation might take comfort from your words. Peace.

Changin' That Game

I'm out this place a week from today,
Mind in a daze, countin' the ticks, thinkin' of ways to change.
They say my name I'll always be known,
Whether I'm locked up, on the run, dead and gone or at home,
But I'd rather be remembered for change:
changin' my name, changin' that game, but not fo' the fame.
Let these lil' dudes know the truth,
Gettin' locked up ain't the thing to do
Get in the booth, and let it all out
'Cause if you keep it locked up,
Frustrations will get you locked down
I'd rather be out on the 'Town
Than end up younger than twenty and underground
So I preach fa' change, do tha same
Don't be greedy, take yo' money an' get out the game
'Cause God knows if you really tryna-- stay outta hell

-Bad Dwayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you're truly gone these words may never find you, but we hope they do, because your flow crackles with fire (and some brimstone too). You are the one with the lessons to teach and you'll tackle your desire (if you practice what you preach.)

I Have Family

I'm mad at the DA because he's an ass and he keeps detaining me because I don't want to speak or in other ways snitch! 'Cause I ain't no snitch. You feel me, I have family to look after. And I don't want nothin' bad to happen 'cause of me, so I'm gonna keep it solid and don't talk, so forget that damn DA keeping me here in this bootsy ass hall. I been here at least five weeks and four days.

For not talking, 'cause I ain't no snitch. I'm gonna keep it solid until they release me , so like I say forget that DA and my fake ass attorney.

-Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It seems like you're here because you're sticking with what you see as the honorable way to go. And that honor is a part of your character that will stick with you no matter what other life decisions you make. But is there a way to go legit and stay true to your loved ones but also stay true to yourself and your freedom? This isn't about your DA, your PD, your counselors or any one else you encounter up in the system... it's about you and what you plan on doing in the future to make sure you live a life that WILL NOT separate you from your family, because it's obvious that they need you and you need them.

Accomplishment

I passed my California High School Exit Examination!
You see it – punk learned something!

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We all knew this particular punk could learn something, and – one day – teach something. Keep it up!

...what makes me happy most is my mom! She is trying to help me survive in this life...

An Unfinished Puzzle

My life is a puzzle, and it ain't never gonna be complete.
From my loss loved ones,
to my corrupt streets,
from the loss of my father, and my brother,
to my fallen soldiers.
But I replace these missing puzzles with love
from my family and my block soldiers in the slums.
But even though I have replacements,
my puzzle will never be complete.
So I just tell my family to stay up and my street g's 'till I die.

-Kaho, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wise piece, wise with the sorrows you've already face. Maybe, given that you already lost your father and brother, your puzzle is the future you create – the family you build. The missing pieces could be the legacy you leave to the next generation. We feel your love for the block soldiers, but can that love ever bring you more than more pain and more sadness? Tell us what you think.

I Love Movies

I like to watch movies with comedy in them. I have learned a lot from Jim Carey and Adam Sandler, 'cause they make me laugh. Movies I like include: "The Mask", "A Series of Unfortunate Events", "The Water Boy", and "Billy Madison".

Another type of movie I like is horror. I like to be scared. Like right now, since I've been in jail, I started reading Goosebumps since I can't watch movies. I have already read three books by R.L. Stine. They include, One Day at Horrorland, The Haunted Mask, and Why I'm Afraid of Bees.

Thank you, Beat, for listening to me talk about my love for movies and, now, books. I will write you again next week.

-Charles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Learning with comedy is like taking medicine with a spoonful of sugar to sweeten the taste. Everyone enjoys laughing, and tests show that laughing is good for you physically, too! No question that fear is stimulating, but we don't know if it's good for you or not (Aristotle's theory notwithstanding).

Admitting Addiction

I am an addict.
I am addicted to something
very dangerous.
Chocolate pudding.
Yes, it's true.
I am a pudding addict.
It took me so much time
to accept it,
but now with the help of PA
(pudding anonymous)
and the twelve steps,
I have been able to work through
my pudding-related issues.
I am now pudding-free
for over three years.

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say addiction stunts your emotional growth. So, emotionally you are a three-year old. Take this into consideration when your emotions appear to rage out of control. Pick up a phone (don't pick up a pudding) and call your sponsor or a PA friend who will understand how you feel. (By the way, it's a misnomer in twelve-step programs when the first word refers to the abused substance, for addiction lives between the ears of the abuser; thus "alcoholics" (similarly "narcotics" meant originally not the substance but the addicts themselves; then Marijuana Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous and, apparently, Pudding Anonymous, began confusing the issue; the twelve-step movement is not like the Prohibition Movement of the Nineteen Twenties: it is not about making any substance illegal but rather treating the disease of addiction, which is to say, the pathology of the addict which enslaves him mentally, physically and spiritually).

Movin' Mean

It' s a crazy world that we divided into cities
I ride for myself and give up to no pity
Hustle style was how I'd stunt
Ridin' around the city smokin' blunts
Makin' a few moves like an OG from the spot
I never stopped until it got hot
Movin' mean on dudes, showin' no fear
Been out here on the street for a few years
OG's like my style, now they want me to ride on they team
IF it ain't my squad the youngsta time to do mean
Money is the only thing on my dome
I gotta get money before I go home
Workin' hard all day is what I did
Until I got attempted murder is what I did
The judge talkin' juvenile life is what he said
Had everything I need but a happy life
Babymama, family, friends now it don't seem right
I wanna do something good
Be happy wit' my son and babymama so I can move out the hood

-Lil' Papa , 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes writing can be like an exorcism – by pushing all the demons onto the page, you can force them out of your soul and emerge clean and free. Do you think that you have left those street dreams/nightmares behind now? They're in your poems, but have they left your heart?

Ten Years From Today

Be real with yourself: Where do you want to be ten years from today? Me, ten years from today, I see myself becoming an EMT/fire fighter, and also going to college to study sociology.

Eventually I see myself as having a four-bedroom house, with an upstairs and a downstairs, and a garage holding two or three cars, with at least one C-class '05 Benz. I see myself in ten years having accomplished the study of life sufficiently to have become somebody in this world. I see myself being more than what I am today, and much more than I was yesterday!

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: After reading this piece, we see the seed of all this shining inside you, awaiting only the passage of time to grow into the reality you imagine for yourself — most especially the person you imagine yourself being in reality ten years from today.

Search for Life in Love

I'll search my heart to death I'll stand and wait until there's nothing left I need life to love me good Life done me wrong now you think "I should?" Read the thoughts in my brain People say I'm stupid, damn I'm also lame I'm gettin 'money while you tryin' to find the game Most people speak on me an' don't know my name. Life is nothing but a trip It moves slow but really faster than a drift. I'm lookin' for love to find To open me up and let me know it's mines. Hold my hands tight and walk real slow I'm wanna find woman to show me life I don't know Kiss me with a real touch I need you so bad and so much.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a piece you deliver! What inspired this? Life is precious and we hope you too see the importance of doing something good with your life and not throwing it a way to the system. There is so much good out there. Start with school, from school anything is possible. Stay focus. Stay hungry to succeed!

What's Make Me Happy

What's makes me happy? When my friend has got my back, protecting me from whatever was going happen to me. But I can handle any guy who's trying messing with me. I got a hotty head goin' on boil! My face always ready to show rage as I fight to win again and again.

But what makes me happy most is my mom! She is trying to help me survive in this life. The way she raised me, she helps me to be a man — but here I am. Being locked up means that I've failed her. So I'm now learning my happiness depends on a new life style that will keep me out of juvenile hall and off probation. I mean, I know that incarceration is trying to help me to do right thing. It is trying make me to address my issues in here, so I can learn how to be successful before I get out of this system.

Change is the only way to do it, so I can get more freedom out in the world around me. There are plenty of things I need to complete in order to successfully reach my goal of staying free. That's what will make me happy, and I want to be happy for myself.

-Dizzy Birdman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad that you do understand that change is required, and that being a man is not making two fists of your hands in rage — not if you don't want to live your life in a cage. Being a man is learning how to walk away from trouble; learning how to accept responsibility so you can bubble legally, earning your money at a j-o-b, not any kind of criminal hustle in the street. Staying posted on the block invites haters and cops like a target waiting to get popped — but make your pay legally and you can't be stopped. You've got to put a chill on that temper, 'cause when your rage you can't remember what you need to do to be successful — life on the street is guaranteed to stay stressful.

This Ain't The Real Me

I sit here in my room, thinkin' what I did was wrong, but God just please forgive God. I just need one last chance in this life, please don't put me away for good.

I will never pop no pills in my life, just give me one more chance and I will show you the real me. All these bad things I do, that ain't the real me. I pray to you God every night but it's like you don't hear me. I know that they say you work in your own way but give me some kind of sign.

Please God. Dear Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner in need of a savior. I know it was my sin that sent you to the cross. You took the punishment in my place. Thank you for sacrificing your life for mine. Thank you for saving me from death and giving me eternal life. Help me to live each day in the knowledge of your death and resurrection. Forgive and eager to honor you.

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If being locked up has given you a chance to ask yourself who you really are, and find out that the pills and the violence and the crime are not the true you, then it could turn out that this time away has been a blessing in disguise. If you mean what you say here, then your life truly does start now, because you're making a commitment to be find out who the true you really is. So tell, us what are the hopes and dreams and plans of the "real Alex?" What do you want from your life, what are you ready to offer the world? What will make you happy?

Grievance

I just want to say something about what happened with some staff. They think I act like I want to be black man. I don't care about that at all! It's just the way I act. I'm just being me. They think I am a "wigga"!

They got me messed up, on my momma! I hate people telling me that I want to be black. I don't give a what about being black. I grew up where I grew up, and this is how I grew up. I'm just me. So, that's it Beat. I just wanted to speak my mind about staff saying something like that to me.

-Lil' Fam'bam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard when the whole minority thing gets turned around on an individual. It's just the flip side of people telling an African American raised in the hills by educated and professional parents that he's "white"! Maybe it's a flatlands-and-the-hills set of stereotypes that are perceived as black and white. In any case, it's all wrong-headed, but don't take it personally — it's a cultural confusion atop a racist contusion.

Man I Messed Up This Time

I messed up this time because I did a very bad thing that I regret.
I know I shouldn't have hit that house lick.
know I shouldn't have stabbed that person,
but it's too late now and I can't take it back.
I wish I wasn't off a pill that day.
My patna shouldn't have forced me to take that pill.
It's like I need God on my side to help me.
And it's like Judge don't want me to be here, but he's tired of seeing me here,
so he's putting me away for a long, long time.
If I wouldn't have run from camp, I wouldn't be in this predicament in the first place.
Thanks for your time.

-Al Boo Boo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Don't give up hope – if there's one thing twelve years of Beat Within have proven, it's that it's never too late to get a second chance in life. There are people (some of them even work at the office) who have spent more than ten years of their lives in jail, and just like you, they felt terrible regret and thought they would never bounce back. But they did, and now they are not just free but teachers who help other people find freedom as well. In a small way you did just that with this piece you wrote. One of the thousands of people who read your words might remember them the next time they are about to do something crazy, maybe hit a lick or take a pill, and because of what you went through – that person might decide not to do it. Even when you are feeling lowest, you always have power you didn't even know about. Keep searching for yours, and as you find it, there will always be room for your power in our pages. Peace, and thank you for having the strength to share your struggle with The Beat Within readers.

Night, Night

Night, Night to my past
I'm cold and lonely from all the bad of the past
I'll do cool if I let it pass fast
Over and over my anger turns me away from joy
It's beatin' me around like a toy.
Night, night to my past

I kill to have my way in life
My past is something, now I gotta think twice
Shame of my past so I remain grand
Rememberies of the boy lyin' on the ground with stains

Dead by time by my past
Left me behind and left me last
Pain in my head tells me to do wrong do care
But if I listen I'll be goin' anywhere

Done wrong in the past now I'm doin' right
Right, right to my past and do right
I'll live with no more shame on my head
It's my past that had me lost and dead

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is sort of like "Crybaby" it takes a word we recognize from childhood and innocence ,"Night night," and puts it in a whole new context – in this case, a return to innocence. You're fighting a battle in this poem, being pulled in two directions. Are you fighting a battle in your life, as well – between two different sides of you?

It Was Her — Part Three: Christmas Night

Weeks went by, and I tried hard, pretending I was fine. No love, no social life — only me and Mom home all day: I was fine!

Yet, on the nights I could not sleep, or in the waking hours when I'd dream of her, I would telephone, just to hear her voice, to hear all of the emotions she tried to hide when I would not speak. Every time she'd say my name, knowing who had called, my heart would skip a beat, for I hoped to die!

Then on Christmas night, she made the mistake of challenging me when I would not speak. I merely laughed, then heard a "beep". On that fateful night, I left the comfort of my home and walked miles in the cold, all to prove I kept my promises. And so she received an extra present, and I gained a new sense of power when I was not caught.

I returned home to my distraught parents, but they believed my lies. I was truly growing as an actress! Inside I laughed at their weakness which had them believing the beast raging in me. Later I told everyone except my most trusted pal that I had no recollection, that I did not know a thing. And in a sense it was true, for with the exception of my friend, all I knew was her!

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not clear whether a second page is missing from this, Part Three, of your story. It appears that there is. So we rounded it off the best we could, given the writing we have in hand. In terms of our response to Part Two, it's interesting to note that while alcohol does not appear in Part Three, the issue of power does — the power of some sort of phantasmal ego that caring nothing about your happiness, appropriates the place of love in your heart and replaces love with a demonic lust to dominate. First of all, it dominates you, for while posing as you, it is not you — indeed, it hates you and continues to lead you down a path of self-destruction, substituting the power to hurt for the satisfactions of love (in AA, ego is an acronym for edging God out, and if, as many believe, God is simply Love, this is applies to you). Then having dominated you, it, the false self or ego that takes pride in lying, calling itself an actress, seeks to dominate others, laughing at their love: e.g., your parents loving concern, to this beast or demon is a sign of weakness — for the weakness of loving another, as it sees it, is the cause of all your pain. Wrong! It is the cause of all your pain, and it's power derives from the lies it has you believing far more than anyone else. With all that said, we still can't wait to read Part Four: The Final Act in next week's Beat!

Is This You, Too?

A shadow of an unknown man floats the streets
Everyone's mad, but why not me?

Mystery of life that this man lives,
He kills, robs, and also gives?

Dividing lives apart is what he do
He'll do anything, this man comin' for you?
Search behind doors and under beds
Take your life and cut off your heads.
He is dead in his eyes of insane This man is me, and I don't got no change.

-Lil Papa , 150 Crew

From The Beat: We might have to sleep with the lights on for a few days. This poem only has 10 lines to it, but those ten lines are terrifying. It's an urban bogeyman, a haunting, Hallowween night every night you read it. As we've said before, it takes a skilled controlled hand to express all these different images, emotions, outlooks in your poems. You have a gift... and it's a gift you've given yourself.

My Freedom And A Kool-Aid Smile

The thought of me getting my freedom back makes me smile with a Kool-Aid smile. The day when I'm blessed to go home and sleep in my own bed, when I can go home and take an untimed shower for sure.

When I can go to a real church, but I'm going to miss Rick though. The day when I'm free as a bird, when there are no limits but back to this hellhole. When I can wear my own stuff again and get on some females fa' sho. Of course I got a wife but I'm still young that's about the only thing that ain't gon' to change, to be honest. When I can be with my family and be happy. I get happy when I read something that relates to me in The Bible.

-Lil' Tonio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So much to say here. The first thing, of course, is congratulations. It's such a joy to see you writing with happiness in your heart instead of the pain and fear of your first pieces. The other is to remember that turning to The Bible has also meant turning to something deeper and better in yourself, and that the prayers mean nothing unless you live by them... we know you will because we've seen you thinking hard in here, about right and wrong, about violence and what it does to people, about kindness and why it matters. As for the females – go out and be young, but if you're not ready to settle down, then you're not ready to have a wife. There's nothing wrong with saying you want to go out with a lot of girls while you're still young, but there is something wrong with lying to one girl about another, or treating girls like the only reason they're there is to give you pleasure. Don't lie. One lie can lead to more, and you know where that path took you! Peace and all our best hopes for the bright future you deserve!

I Wonder

I wonder, why my life is nothing but a game
You come to jail and yours will be the same.
I wonder, why we love but always do wrong
I'll do right once but life is long
I wonder, why don't I have no fears?
I'm tired of cryin' and droppin' my tears.
I wonder, why I am grown up wit' a lot of shame?
People know me but I don't know the same.
I wonder, why all my feelings inside always stay?
I love myself is what I always say.
I wonder about life and why I'm here?
I think I'm loved but nobody seems to care.
I wonder, so do you?
Tell me, what you wonder too?

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Langston Hughes, one of the greatest American poets (and also one of the first well known black American poets) called his autiobiography "I Wonder as I Wander," and it's a trip how much the themes of your poem up here – pain and feeling isolated, reaching out to others to find out if this loneliness is the connecting thread that holds humanity together – connect to the themes in Hughes' own life...almost as if the young poet (you) is stepping in to pick up where the old poet (Hughes) left off.

Breathe

breathe, breathe, breathe
come on, bring it
i dare you to mess
with my fire
are you ready for this heat
breathe, breathe, breathe
come on, push it
bring it to the max
fueling the beat
can you move with it
breathe, breathe, breathe
pushing harder, stronger
it's there fighting
going wild
need it stop
breathe, breathe, breathe
moving with the beat
rhymes growing loud
expanding sound setting us free
just you breathe
let it run wild
set your mind free
breathe
and listen to
the beat

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When the imagination is set free and you can fly mentally over these walls of captivity, your soul is set free from the daily stress of living in this mess and all the rest that puts your sanity to the test. On the breath the spirit floats and swims, flies and sings of the present moment only — and all the troubles that make you sad or lonely are ghosts of yesterday. In the present moment when your mind is free, you have the power to change future reality as step by step you dance beyond fatality. For fate is shaped by mental causality. Therefore dance, sing, breathe and burn with desire, as with every turn the future is changed by the heat of your fire.

I Need

I need a woman that's gon' be there.
Loves me for who I am and not a toy,
She's full of happiness also joy

I need love that's gon' love me back.
That comes with a open heart not a broken pack
Hold me tight when I feel down,
She'll be there to pick me off the ground

I need my family to feel me in my pain
To know I love them the same
Open their arms and hold me close
To really know I need them the most.

I need my son to grow up to be a man
It takes me to teach him, which I try -- to the point I know I can
Look out for his mother while I ain't there
To know Daddy loves them and forever cares.

I need the world to believe I can try
Instead of lookin' at me sayin' hi and bye
I need, my baby mama to keep me strong
I love her and will never do her wrong.
I need...

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You take what starts out as a love poem, asking your girl to have faith in you, and turn it into a poem about faith in general – about loving your son, about how much the human heart cries out for support and belief, how much we all need encouragement to dig ourselves out of trouble. It's at once a cry for help and an affirmation of how strong you really are. Another one hit right out the ballpark.

Thoughts In My Head

I have a chance to change
It's up to me to go or let my life remain
Open my mouth to speak out clear
It's hard for me to focus but "why or where"
I need help to pick me up,
I need someone to answer my ands, where's and buts
Hold my hand so I can walk
I'm stuck in a hole and can not talk
My heart placed on God and love
I done my life wrong for trying' to be a thug
I need somebody to love until my death
Give my love and heart until there's nothing left. I'm expressin' my true feelings
Love me for life true love we giving.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: On the one hand, we read this with the joy of appreciating a heartfelt poem, on the other hand, we also heard the loneliness in the request for "help to pick me up." You lost your brother and from what you've written never gotten much from your father, and as you write, you're not full-grown yet. So our question to you is, is there father-type role model you can turn to as you try to wrestle with all these questions? A mentor, a tutor, a teacher? You need to find a way to get that help, both inside and – we pray – outside if you get a reprieve.

Hurting

My heart hurts so much because I haven't seen my grandma. She usually comes to visit me on Saturdays — and I'm kinda nervous. Maybe she was busy, but my heart was like, "She'll come see you next Saturday." So I was like, "Okay."

Here's her favorite song, Amazing Grace:

Amazing grace how sweet
The sound that save of ranch
Like me I once was lost but
Now I'm found was blind but now I see
Praise God praise God praise God
Praise God praise God praise God
Amazing grace shall always be my song of praise
For it was grace that caught my liberty
I do not know just how He came to love me
So He looked beyond my thoughts and saw my needs
I shall forever lift my eyes to Calvary
To view the cross that Jesus died for me
How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul
He looked beyond my thoughts and saw my needs

-Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a beautiful song indeed. And so many wonderful melodies and renditions abound! Did you know the man who wrote it was a slave trader? His ship was caught in a terrible storm at sea, and he saw it as God's punishment for this sin. So he swore, were he to survive, he would give up his immoral profession and fight to have the British trade in slaves ended by law.

Crybaby Crybaby

I'll wipe away the tears You been hurt and hurt for so many years. You're strong and you have a great mind A beautiful place that always shines Crybaby, forever hold your pain I'll forever be there still as your main Happy days all I see while asleep Without you I can't sleep, eat, or think Crybaby, because that's what we all do And if nobody knows that you love me t hen they know I love you too I'll cry along with you, showin' I care I'm willin' to go wit' you anywhere Crybaby for anybody who is inside you deep, Touches your soul deep to the point you can't sleep crybaby crybaby just cry with me.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Half poem, half lullaby, this poem has a rhythm of its own that can rock you to sleep. We love the way the whole way through it seems like you're writing just to our girl, but then you make it a poem for anybody who has ever had a crybaby of their own: "For anybody who is inside you deep."

Street to Jail

Bein' away from home can break you down.
Inside a max cell all day you might as well be underground
Listening to a sound that's nothing but air
Write letters every day to see if they still care
Every second think about home
Stuck behind these walls, make you feel like a dead zone
Anger starts to build up fast
All my friends I just leave in the past

Letters from a girl brings you smiles
Thinkin' 'bout your old lifestyle like girls gone wild
Stressed by the words of love
In a jail away from love, make you go crazy
On a one way street begging for my lady

This is the life of a solid stone
Got control over us like a dog with a bone
Now I'm stuck in side jail, away from home
Sitting in jail, all alone.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem is so lonesome and sad that it deserves its own harmonica wail Maybe we should make it an official song for 150 – "The Alameda County Blues" or "Lockdown lament" ... you took sorrow and turned it into art, transformed loneliness into a call out to all your brothers and sisters in their own cells. That's poetry.

Rest in Love My Brother "Wezzy"

I miss my brother like crazy
I'll give my life to be with him but forever I'll stay shady.
It's a cold world bein' alone
We stay together in the zone
I guess real always gon' know real
This is my brother there's no other deal.
He rest in my heart,
I'm gonna do my thang, smart and make a new start.
I drop tears every night,
So much anger inside me so my body won't let me fight.
My best friend also my brother
Different daddy's but same mother.
This pain will forever last.
It's Lil' Papa and I'll never let this past
It's still us against the world
I just got some help now and that's my girl.
Remember you're always loved by me,
Real ninjas feelin' I'm gonna make it hard for fake ninjas to sleep
Rest in love

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Stay shady forever?" "Us against the world?" Threats? No, Lil' Papa. If you want to honor your brother, if you want him to "rest in love" as you wrote so well, then you have to be the one to get out of all this pain you've seen. You have a girl, you have family, you have a baby boy who looks up to you... shady is what you need to turn your back on. The darkness has taken enough away from you, don't you deserve better?

sometimes i dislike

my writings so much i
shred them or cross them out
so very darkly it makes me wonder
if these words will even survive
till the beat within comes

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Made it in the nick of (some)time(s) the words survive the harshest censor of the mind.

Baby Mama

I'm sorry for all my pain
Stay with me I promise I'll change
You're the only woman I ever love
You my mama and my brother above
Baby you is a strong black girl
I done you wrong now I wanna give you the world
You open my eyes to really see life
And everything I seen just seemed nice
I want our child to live in peace
Don't have to worry about claimin' the west or the east
This is our life and I want the best
I need you for life, forget the rest
So take my hand and stand close
I'm thinkin' of you and I need you the most.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "I want our child to live in peace." Yes – it's a dream worth making real. But how? Let's say you get out and you and your girl decide to try to make things right for your new family. How will you do it, where will you live? What's your plan? Do you have a step by step idea of what you're going to do to make this happen?

I Know

I really am ready to change my life, because I know what I did to get in the situation I am in now, and I know I was wrong in what I did to get myself in juvenile jail like this. I am here as a result of a warrant I got because I didn't go to court. Now I go to court on March fifteenth, and they are going to put me in a placement where I am going to be for a week or two.

So the reason why I am writing this is because I now know that I really need to change my life around. And I have a strong reason why I want to change my life around: I have a child that I have to take care of now, my daughter. She is the only love in my life besides my baby-daddy and my family. So this is why I am really looking at what I used to do, because I know what I really have to do to live life right.

I know I am very important to my family and my baby's father. That's why I know that I not want to mess up my life over anything stupid. So I really need to control the things I do, because I know the choices I've been making are not the right things for me to do. If I don't change what I do, it will get me back in the system again, and I know I don't want that to happen to me. I'm out, Beat!

-Baby Thickness, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, girl, you should be at home now as you read this piece. How is it going? Are you sticking to your plan to change what you do? Is it your temper that gets you into trouble? Is it alcohol abuse that messes with your mind, or weed, or some other drug? What are some of the things you do to slow your roll and get back in control of your life? Drop us a line for The Beat Without, and we'll print it without a doubt. How was that "mothering" program you went to for a week or two? Did it help? What did you learn?

What Would Happen

Thinkin' to myself in my lonely room,
What I had done wrong,
I hope I don't be gone for too long,
'Cause I have loved ones waitin' for me back at home,
Thinkin' what I got myself into,
Thinkin' what would happen to me,
Would I be able to see my family, Would I be able to see freedom?
If not I'd rather be dead then alive,
'Cause it's easier to die than struggle to stay alive, like Tupac said:
Heaven or hell, it ain't no place for me in jail, it's five-hundred-racks for my bail.

-J-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Aaah, but Tupac also said that the rose grows from concrete. Right now, you're in the mental concrete of your situation, but see the love you feel for your family, the dreams you have of freedom, the thoughts inside your mind, and of course the poetry that comes from all of it – that's your rose. That's what will keep you going. Hold on to that rose. Water it, feed it... the rose is you.

If My Life Had a Soundtrack?

I would pick "Four-Page Letter" — because that lets me know to pick the best person to spend my life with, and know that they won't beat me or torture me, etc.

I like honest people that I can trust, people I can reason with when we're having a hard time or having a problem together. Remember to think before you do, and don't come back here — if you do, you'll be coming to the new Juvenile Hall! Good luck!

-Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some say the new Hall will be getting detainees ready for prison, but it all still depends on your individual decisions when you're out there free, doing your homework from school or out on a mission. As for the one you choose to share your life, the two characteristics you name — trustworthy and reasonable — sound exactly right; without those attributes, love disappears from sight!

…it's different when you hit the block -- those thoughts we all had while we were locked up, saying we were gonna try to keep cool, they all just went flying like a bullet.

Beauty Of My Girl

Shady night of a cold wind
The moon just startin' to shine this only to begin
Hearts start to creep out
Love is in the air that's what this about
Sounds of kisses start to get loud
A beautiful lady fades the clouds
Face like a baby of and follower
She's always bright, every second and every hour.
The world ain't got beauty like this.
She's full of joy in love so you can't miss
Bright light go away when she's on the shop
Sexy body that's so hot
Fire is what she's really like
You at a battle and she'll rock the mic
This woman is only for me
I love her and she love me can't you see
Sugar sweet like a bag of cotton
She's with me so you'll sit there and fade then turn rotten
My heart to her forever will grow, we can take it fast or slow.
I love her whatever she say, she gone have my heart any way
'cause a good woman will stay, she ain't gon' fade away
While you sleep one day.

-Lil' Papa Mykel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you treat your girl as well in real life as you do in these love poems, because if you do, she's a lucky girl. This poem especially reads like a celebration, a burst of joy, we could almost hear the music in the background in our minds – as if you were leading a parade in honor of your love.... Amazing to think that so much light could come out of this dark place you're in right now. And that light belongs to you and the strength of your spirit

Happy Thoughts

The thing that makes me smile is a girl named Stephanie. I mean, I'm locked up but every time I think about her I feel like I'm free and not locked up. Like I was feeling sad today but when I call her she made my day change. It went from sad to glad in like two seconds.

This girl is so special to me. Like she ain't my girl, but we talk almost every day. What makes me smile about her is when she talks to me, she makes me feel like I'm not a gang member. It's like she makes all my troubles go away. Also that she has like the most beautiful eyes I ever seen. They're like greenish but those make me feel good. She always makes me blush when I talk to her. I think without her my time will go by slow.

-Termite U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have such a fine friend. Even if she is not truly your girlfriend, the way she makes you feel (and the fact that she makes you blush) means that maybe she will become your girl in the future. If she makes you feel so good because you no longer feel like a gang member, then maybe the path to a more permanent good feeling — one that depends on you and not on her — is to stop being a gang member. Ever think about that?

Life Is Too Short

I didn't even get to see him touch him hold him, none of that. Get y'all shhh together 'cause life it's real short. My son knows he was here for a couple of minutes.

-Shady E , 150 Crew

From The Beat: He knows and you know too. If his little spirit would want anything for his mamma and pops, what would it be? To be free. To be smart. To live life free of jail, drugs and all negativity!

What You Gonna Do With Your Life Before The Bullet Stops You?

Its crazy how I was just here like ten months ago. I hate camp but I left some vatos behind, I know in their minds they said I wish I had that chance to hit camp. Now I'm back in here not knowing what they might do to me. All I could do is just wait and pray for the best.

One thing about the Hall is that when you get here you say I'm gonna try to stay low, be cool and do good. But it's different when you hit the block -- those thoughts we all had while we were locked up, saying we were gonna try to keep cool, they all just went flying like a bullet.

But just like the bullet flies out the hall, it stops somewhere. So what I mean by that is what we all gonna do while that bullet is still on the air? Me, I'm gonna be smarter and have my eyes open, 'cause you never know what this generations might bring to my life.

-Chuckie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Each week, your thoughts get a little deeper, your writing gets a little stronger, and this time you just knocked as out, as if your words were a bullet too –aimed straight at our hearts. It hurts to think of you and yours, full of strength and readiness to change, and then getting all caught up again. And now you say you're gonna be smarter. Smarter how? Will you quit committing crimes, running the streets? You know from experience how easy it is to slip. How strong is your dream of dodging that bullet for real?

Open Your Heart

Open your heart, and there will be me We can grow old and raise a family. Open your heart, cause it's so much of a pain Give it to me and your heart will change Open your heart, for me to come inside 'cause You want me and I want you the most Open your heart because it's love in this life Do a lot of things and see things that's nice Open your heart, and I'll open my soul Reach and side my body and grab my heart and hold Open your heart, 'cause girl you so fine Open your heart, because I wanna make you mines Open your heart I'll tell you what I see It's you and me with dreams of family.

-Lil' Papa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Dreams of family". When you imagine what you want family life to be like, what do you see? Pushing a stroller on a Sunday afternoon, helping a young boy with his homework? Doing a sink full of dishes? Going out for a late-night diaper run? Reading books to your son before he goes to sleep? Use your words to paint a picture of that family dream...

One More Day in This Prison

What's up? Here I am one more week.
I spend the days thinking of my family,
Thinking of my little girl
And how I'm missing the most beautiful moments of her life
Really, all I want is to be with my daughter
To take care of her
Protect her
Be there for her when she needs me
I pray to God to give me a chance to return to her
And never separate myself from her again.
No one knows what will happen in my life.
My life is in the hands of the judge
But in my heart
I know
That I am in the hands of God.
Dedicated to all those who are locked up.
Have faith in God, because He is the only one who is with us.

-Lazy, 150 Crew

The Beat: You did not write this as a poem, but you wrote it with such heart and simple love that it felt like a poem or a prayer – as we read it. We hope your daughter one day learns how much her father loves her, and how much goodness there is inside you. In the meantime, we hope that others in your situation might take comfort from your words.

Myself

Who am I mad at the most?
I am most mad at myself.
Why because I am in juvenile hall.
I'm in here for being stupid.
I took my parents car and went driving
then got blurped by the pigs and I wouldn't stop and face the consequences.
I hit a lady.
I then got out on Electronic Monitor, but failed that in 6 days
for not listening and my mom called me in.
So then I ended up in group home and I had to go to the store and steal.
I got caught up three times and now I'm back the hall waiting to go to camp.
This is why I'm mad
because I can't get it together and finish a program.
I just can' stop letting people tell me what to do.
I need to stop doing this before I end up in CYA.
So I might be mad at myself but I am going to finish a program and get out
so I can stop coming to juvenile hall.

-Usher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you've been doing some big thinking about your situation. Perhaps the best thing one can do for oneself when in a difficult situation is to realize your own role in things—once you take responsibility for your mistakes you can take responsibility for your future success and overcoming those obstacles. Good luck!

I got caught up three times and now I'm back the hall waiting to go to camp. This is why I'm mad because I can't get it together and finish a program.

Lost My Son While I've Been Locked Up

What's up wit' it Beat? This yo' bra Shady E. I been here for the last three months. So much stuff is goin' on while I am in here.

My son was born on Feb,19,2007. He died when he was born. Yeah, it's hard right now, but I got to deal wit' it and try to keep goin'. But it's gone be a struggle. I am just keepin' my head up. Well I'll holla at y'all later. RIP lil' Emmanuel Espinoza (my son).

-Shady E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shady, we're so sorry about your son. It's terrible and unfair that you were locked up while that happened. You should be allowed to grieve with your baby mamma and the rest of your family. We hope that his death will help you figure out what you want to do with your life. Maybe you'll realize that you're really to young to have a child and now is your chance to do all the things that you would want for your own son: get educated, learn a skill, establish a sustainable life that won't keep you in jail or prison as you get older.

the answer to anything

... is quite simple:
"shut up and listen up
before they lock you up"
sounds dumb, right?
how 'bout you try it first
then again, chocolate pudding works
just as well i guess
at getting rid of stress

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Distraction is a short-term solution, an action an addict is addicted to using to the point of abusing. We'd recommend Pudding Anonymous if we weren't so pusillanimous.

Have faith in God, because He is the only one who is with us.

An Accomplishment

I had an accomplishment by getting my diploma. But I know I didn't get it in high school, I got it in the hall. I am graduating in weeks, but I'm still going to be up in here probably another month. At least I got a diploma.

When I get out, I can go to JC College and play ball for two years. Then go to UCLA. So that's what I accomplished.

So peace out Beat. This is yo' boy Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a big accomplishment, regardless of where you got it at. How many people do you know that have their diplomas? You have some very solid, good goals set up for yourself. We believe you can reach those goals if you give it all you've got. Like playing ball, it's a matter of how bad you want it and what you'll do to get it!

The Heart

the heart is like a drum
that constantly beats inside your rib cage
to the point in time and space
where the drum will stop beating
and when that happens, i don't know

-Snow Rabbit Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The task is rather to use this time, measured by the beat of our hearts, to do good on earth — strive to bring love into this world in all we do, and then — our love will never end. That's heart, too.

This One Time

I remember when I was not yet fifteen years old. I sleep over my cousin's house. We were saying jokes that made me laugh. Then later than my cousins fell to sleep, and me and my little brother draw stuff on my cousins' faces. Funny thoughts.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Ha, your cousins must have been pissed when they woke up. Did they ever do anything to you and your little brother to get even?

What Makes Me Smile

The thing that makes me smile, and makes me feel happy every time I think about it, is freedom. Every time I think about when I was free or when I am going to be free, it ends up going to a daydream about all the things I am going to do when I get out, then it goes to memories I have when I was out.

-Jose

From The Beat: That daydream will come true one day Jose. And when that day come, make sure you cherish it. What are you going to do when freedom comes to you again — and, especially, what are you going to do that's different so that you can keep your freedom?

Happy Thoughts

The thing that makes me smile every time I think about it is my girlfriend. Thinking about her in here has kept me going every day. She's the first thing I think about in the mornings, and the last I think about at night. She's the one that has kept me alive a couple times, when I almost killed myself. She talked me out of it, and held me in her embrace, whispering in my ear, making me feel safe. I love her and all that. She's my happiest thought in my whole life.

-Ruben

From The Beat: This is someone to treasure, as you clearly do, Ruben. But can we ask you a question: If she sees in you something special enough to love and keep safe, do you love and respect her enough to treasure what she treasures — namely, yourself? Do you love yourself as much as she loves you? Can you love her if you don't love what she loves? We know that true salvation can only come through your own soul, and you're your own heart, but we hope you will cherish this relationship, so that you find a way to keep yourself free, knowing that every time you get caught up or get locked up, you are causing her pain, and threatening this powerful relationship.

Pranks

I remember being at the homies' house chillin', and the first one that goes to sleep they will pull pranks on them, like draw in their face. That's what make me smile.

-Dumbo

From The Beat: That's a funny prank. Did it every happen to you?

Who You Mad At?

The people that I'm mad at are my enemies, because they done lots of stuff to me and to my family. That's why I have lots of hate to them.

-Smiley

From The Beat: We don't blame you for hating people that have done bad stuff to your family, but don't they hate you for the same reasons? If you weren't banging in the first place, you wouldn't have enemies, and those things that happened wouldn't have happened, right? Do you think you can keep doing what you've been doing without paying the same prices? We don't.

Using Pencil And Paper

Tearful eyes, quiet smiles, the world's full of crime.
This day seem so long like there's no tomorrow,
But days go by, just another tally for my count.
Nothing ever changes,
Still have to wait for directions.
Don't ask for any explanations
They'll use time against you if you don't meet their expectations
Tiptoe around, make no sudden sounds
Use your pencil and paper
To voice your words.
Don't get caught!
You won't do the time
That's what I've been taught

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: The direction you are waiting for is in your heart. Only you can lead yourself in the direction you, yourself want to go. People can only give you advice, but at the end, it comes down to you. If we could add one things we've learned: if you don't do the thing, you can't get caught!

Mad At Myself

The reason I'm mad is the same reason I'm mad at myself, like the time I thought everything was God's fault. When I realize that I'm guilty for picking the path I thought was right, but sometimes it's hard picking that path when you never had a role model as a father.

And now that I'm locked up and my girlfriend is out there in the real world alone with needing me and my love, and my mama with tears and pain, my little brother with no one to look up to, so that's the reasons why I'm mad at myself.

But one thing I know that for you to be forgiven from God and the ones that you hurt, you need to forgive yourself. But it is hard for me when is hard to forgive myself.

-Young Juvie

From The Beat: Yes, you chose the path, and you got you caught up. You may have done things that you're ashamed of, but owning up to that shame is the beginning of change, and of forgiveness. If you are sincere in your regrets — which means, if you are committed to changing your life and not hurting anyone in the future — then your life will change, and forgiving yourself will come naturally, as will God's forgiveness. Though you didn't have a role model in life, that doesn't mean your little brother shouldn't have one too. You are his role model and he is looking up to you — not to what you say, but to what you do. Don't disappoint him or yourself!

Proud Of Myself

Something that I have done that I'm proud of is that even though I ran away from my group home, that even though I violated my probation and court order, I managed to stay clean and seek a drug and substance abuse program all on my own.

I have also regained the trust of my mom to take me back into her home after all the wrong that I have done her. I also managed to get back the love my little brother had for me, but was lost because of the way I used to act while I was on drugs. I'm just hoping that the court sees that even though I ran away from my group home and violated probation, I have made an effort to seek services and stay clean on my own and that hopefully they'll release me to the custody of my mom.

-Juan

From The Beat: Closed mouths don't get fed, Juan. If you want someone to know about the good things you have done, tell them. We certainly hope your PO recognizes that staying drug free is the beginning of real positive change, even though running from your program is a violation. We are also proud of you for dealing with the most pressing problem you have had, which is drug use, and we think you're well on your way to a better life. You've shown that you can take back control. Now exercise that control in the service of a better future.

Life Is A Game

Life is like game of chess
Everybody wants to be a King or Queen
Tryin' to make it to the top
But life is a struggle
And at every point, everyone flops
And there is hustla' in every one's veins
Like a farmer that sells crops
Or maybe a homie selling dope on the block
Everyone's just trying to eat
And feed their mouth
But there always some in a drought
Life is crazy
I know that for a fact
I been through a lot
At points where there was no food on the table
To where homies were dead
To points like now
Locked up in YSC
Rockin' the yellow thread
But life is a big game
You never know
Who's next in line
For their life to be taken away
It could be anything
To take them away
It could be a rival gang
Drive by on the block
Or maybe a car crash
And not even die by the hand of a glock
There are kids dying
By starvation
Not even reaching
Seven years old
Or maybe like my Uncle Sam
Who died by a overdose
And there's supposed
To be a God
But why is the world so cold
I pray
Every night to the Lord
To help me stay on my toes
'Cause at points
I feel like I'm going to fold
But all I can do is stay strong
And maintain
And just live life
'Cause life is a beautiful thang
But life is a game
This goes out to all

-Lil' Vishus

From The Beat: Life is precious and life is a gift. It is much more than a game. If you take it as a game, then we don't see how you could ever be more than a pawn, played by those with money and power at the top so that they never have to share their money or power. You may be a pawn that doesn't get taken, or one that falls to protect his color's king or queen, but is that all you want out of life? We think the struggle you've already had to endure would make you see that this is not a game, but a precious treasure. In the end, it's over for all of us, but what we do between now and then determines whether we live long or short, and for us, long is better than short.

I also managed to get back the love my little brother had for me, but was lost because of the way I used to act while I was on drugs.

Baby Girl

Aqui estoy Camirando! I want to be there with you, so I can run my fingers through your hair and show you that I really care. But it's rare 'cause I never felt like this before. So let me show you what I could do for the Bay Area. But ain't over that.

You need a friend. I could be your friend, soul mates 'till we meet our ends. I been locked up, I ain't gonna lie! But to you baby girl, I am someone you could rely on. So set your eyes on me and let's together ride. Don't hide the feeling and let's enjoy it.

We got all night so lets bust to the break on down! Baby girl I wanna make you mine! Cuando estoy contigo es algo muy especial (when I'm with you it's something very special), so mija don't pay attention to dese haters trying to break us apart. I gave you my heart so I don't want it back. You could keep it 'cause it's yours.

You remember when I told you we was gonna ride till the day we die, Mija, it wasn't no lie. I was speaking from the heart!

-Lil' Smiley

From the Beat: When we compare your words of love with your actions, things just don't add up. You claim you gave her your heart, but what about the rest of you? You chose something that you love even more than her, because you allowed the system to take you from her, and put you in a position to be writing this "love letter" from behind walls and locked doors. What kind of love is that? When you promise someone you claim to love an early grave (or a cell) — which is what that "ride till we die" motto is a prescription for — then we have to question whether it's your own comfort you're most concerned with, and just lying to yourself about having her best interests at heart. If you're still down for the game that puts you into the hands of strangers to determine your every move, then we hope she has more sense than you, and decides that her life is more important than all the words of love all the men in the world can spin out of their mouths.

My Goals

Some of my accomplishments was to have a two jobs, my own car and live on my own supporting myself. I was also going to go to a adult school so I can get my diploma. My other accomplishment was to get to save a least 10,000 dollars in three months. Stay with my girlfriend and not cheat on her. Also lose weight and get into shape so I can look better and be in shape.

My best accomplishment was becoming manager of a electrician company at a young age of 16 and for the first time be the boss of someone else. My paycheck was seven-hundred-dollars a week and I didn't do a lot of work. I just told people how to do the work.

-Pato

From The Beat: We're not sure how much of this you actually did (and are therefore proud of as accomplishments) and how much you hope to do. Because if you accomplished even half the things you wrote about here, why did you get locked up? What was worth more than freedom and being in charge of your own life?

Happy Thoughts

What put a smile on my face is knowin' that I got my girl waitin' for me when I get out. What put a smile on my face is knowin' that I won't be comin' back when I get out. What put a smile on my face is thinkin' about all the good times I had before I came in and thinkin' about what I'm going to do when I get out. It make me smile thinkin' about the fact that I'm still alive.

-Ko

From The Beat: We hope that you will keep your words, and that this will be the last time we see you in the hall. If you know what led you here, then you know what you need to avoid to stay out of here. Tell us about your plans for when you get out.

What's Love?

First of all, love is a strong word with lots to its meaning,
To only be present when meant and forever, not just the time being,
It's a gift to be earned through trust not lust,
If it's genuine there's no denying it, it's a must.
For those are strong emotions in need to express,
Giving their hearts to each other, nothing less.
My words may seem deep, so you know they're true,
So the question is, "What Is Love To You?"

-Vago

From the Beat: You have given a great definition to what is love. So our question to you is, "Are you in love?"

Who You Mad At?

I am are mad with my PO because in February I could have been release, and my PO said no, she want me to serve more time and she want me back to Mexico after I serve me time.

-Mauricio

From The Beat: There should be one more person you should be also mad at Mauricio, and that is yourself. If you hadn't placed yourself in this situation, you would have been at home right now and without worrying about your PO letting you out or not. If you have to serve time and then get deported, what's your plan for after that? Just remember that everything you do — and everything you choose not to do — has a consequence.

Past is Past, Future Is Yours

I made choices and the law responded,
There's more to it than just getting caught, so let me be honest,
I made foolish choices before I was locked up,
I was blessed, didn't reflect the way I was brought up...

Kept acting up, was put in the hall,
I've seen some athletes here, they gon' get out and ball
This time I took so much pride every time I could call,
Staff can show up to work; here they gave me their all.

I've been in and out, on the wrong route,
The love I thought I was missing I wasn't without,
Mom loved me, yet I caused her more tears,
She loved me no less, after all these years...

Truth is I needed help; in fact I still do,
Now I'm back on track, and you can be too,
If I would have listened to mom I'd be on track sooner
Honor your family and you'll love your future,

My legal stats were bad, but the past is behind me,
On the outs, in the gym and in college you'll find me...

You can succeed too, and in fact, you will,
What you do is your choice, Thank you for letting me
Keep it real,
Remember you have power in your heart,
Where to start? Start with your voice and remember
I'ma say it again, you have a choice...

-Andrew

From The Beat: You see athletes and we see a great writer and thinker, a writer who can definitely succeed is he decides to take the track as a writer. What you have is a great talent, Andrew. You have proven it with this wonderful piece, a piece that spoke nothing but the truth, which we appreciate. It's sometimes hard to find such honest people who aren't afraid to face the truth and share their experience with others. So thank you for keeping it real.

Accomplishment

I have not accomplished a lot of things, but one thing that I have accomplished is that I have supported my mom until now. I helped her in times of struggle and pain. This accomplishment makes me feel proud of it because a mom is the most important thing you can have in your life. If help her by working hard, and helping her put food on the table. Now that I'm at the YSC, I feel that I'm just making things worse for her and making her struggle more.

-Silent

From The Beat: You mother must have been happy to have you by her side helping her along the way. But now, since you've allowed yourself to be taken from her, you are causing her pain. Who is taking care of her now? The next time your home with the person you owe the most to, think about your mother first, and ask yourself if what you're thinking about doing would hurt her.

Freedom Makes Me Smile

What makes me smile is the thought of freedom, being able to do what I want and being with my family.

Yesterday made me really happy because after almost a year of being here, I got a temporary release to see my doc in Daly City, and it felt so good, I could not stop smiling. It's been so long that I forgot what it feels like to be a free.

Now that I get a taste of freedom, I feel when I get out I will do whatever I can to never come back and have my freedom taken.

-James

From The Beat: To have your freedom, you must be ready to sacrifice some of what you've been doing. Keep in mind when you get out how important freedom was to you at the time you lost it, and do not take your freedom for granted once you get out. At times, when you feel you are failing and are tempted to fall back to your old life (because you will be tempted), think about the strength you have right now to keep your freedom. We know you have what it takes to do what you need to do, but only you can answer whether you will do it or not.

Happy Thoughts

A lot of things make me smile. There are times when I'm in my room lying down, and I just know that when I get out soon, I'm going to be with my family and be a changed person and start a new life.

Another thing that makes me smile and be happy is when I tell myself that I accepted Jesus in my heart and knowing that He is in my life and keeping an eye over me. That gives me the motivation and strength to get me through this struggle.

-Carlos

From The Beat: If you're talking about the struggle to get through your current situation – being locked up in the hall — we know you can get through it. What we're hoping is that your newfound faith in Jesus keeps you moving in a different direction than the one that brought you here, because it's after the hall that matters, and that means taking control of your life and making the decisions you know God put you here to make.

Origami

I do origami and I have accomplished many projects in this art (origami is the act of folding paper). I am most proud of the imoseyama or double-crane that I've made. The imoseyama is made of a rectangular piece of paper (unlike regular origami paper which is square) with a slit in it. After that, you follow the same instructions as the crane. It is very hard and is actually easiest to do with an 11x8 piece of paper.

The Imoseyama means a lot to me because I have worked on it for about two years. I finally made it on December 15, 2006. When it was done I was extremely proud. I showed it to everyone I could, and even posted a picture of it on my webpage. This is the best thing I have ever made.

The imoseyama means a lot of things. It represents strength, everlasting love (since cranes mate for life and it's two cranes), and good fortune. It is also considered a bringer of good luck to anyone who makes it within 48 hours. Since I did not make it within the time limit, I do not supposedly get good luck. But that is ok because I do not believe in luck.

-Lavos

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your story with us. You have taught us a lot. The only thing we want to add is that this art form is particularly associated with Japan. We'll never look at origami in the same way, knowing that it takes so much to make it, and that there's so much meaning behind every piece. We would love to see a picture of your imoseyama. Could we?

What I Needed

What I needed
Was a father to teach me to be a man
What I needed
Was a father to grab my helping hand.

What I needed
Was a father just to be around.

What I didn't need was a father to beat me down.
What I didn't need was a father to run the town.

What I didn't need was my father to be a clown.
Now that I don't have a father who's going to teach me the unknown?

-Clarence

From the Beat: Some of us grow up with no positive role models in our lives, but that can make us strong because we have to learn everything by ourselves. You certainly didn't need a father to beat you down, and you must take care not to become that kind of father yourself, because it's so easy to think that what you experienced growing up is "just the way things are" or the way they should be. Because of what you missed growing up (and because of what you didn't miss), you have some extra obstacles to overcome in your life. But because of your own strengths, both intellectual and experiential, you also have some extra tools to overcome those obstacles, as long as you're determined to do so. We see that determination. Do you?

Accomplishment

I guess my greatest accomplishment is graduating sixth grade. That was the shhh, 'cause I really didn't think I was going to pass that year. I mean, I never did any of the things I was supposed to do, getting suspended, fights, and ditching school.

But the last few months I really buckled down and did what I had to do. I didn't think it was enough to pass the grade but when they called my name, I knew I had did enough to pass sixth grade. I think that is my greatest accomplishment.

-Biggy

From The Beat: We think this was a wonderful accomplishment, too, Biggy, but an even greater one is that you now know you can do anything you set your mind to. You let yourself slip far behind, but then put all your effort into passing, and you succeeded. That should tell you all you need to know about changing your future.

To Gain

We all don't like takin' losses,
Always tryna gain somethin' like some hustlas and bosses,
But when we do lose something, we take it hard,
Somethin' like lost knowledge to a retard,
But look at us, we done lost so much already,
Our freedom and all that comes with it steady,
So is y'all in this to lose or gain?
To be free of all worries and past pain,
Make your decisions and choose the best,
Look for the answer to the left of your chest. (ya heart)

-Vago

From The Beat: So what does your heart tell you, Vago? How do you define "to lose" or "to gain?" If you plan to gain your freedom and hold on to it, what do you have to do?

Police

I'm mad at the police 'cause they keep messing with me nonstop. They always keep finding reasons to bring me back to jail. There are some shady cops.

-Goofy

From The Beat: If you didn't have anything on you or did anything to give them a reason to lock you up, it wouldn't matter how shady they are. You painted a target on your own back, so who should you really be mad at?

To The Beat

I live in a world of shiny glass bubbles
Surrounded by junkies complaining about
their troubles
Smokin' trees, and meth
My mom tellin' me to do my best
Failing miserably, putting myself to shame
I can't get out, I'm stuck in dis game
Now I'm locked up again
I got no one, not one single friend
Life is messed up, I hate this shhh
'Cause I'm back here again
Stop... freeze and just pretend
Dat it's all fake and in da end
I'm back home with my family
Where I belong
So just maybe I can stop feeling, forever
gone.

-Lauren

From The Beat: You will always have The Beat here as a friend. And no one is really stuck in the game without making choices that leave you stuck. We know life is a struggle because it is so for us, too (and many of us have been where you are). But we also know you have some strengths that others are not so blessed to have — a good mind, a strong will, and a desire to live a different kind of life. These are not small things, and you should take some comfort in the fact that you can draw on these strengths. Reach out and seek the help of others, some who've been through what you're going through and some who have not. No one of us can make this journey alone, so look for the help you need, then get it. It can make all the difference in the world.

Just Chillin' Makes Me Happy

Some things that make me happy is when I'm with my homeboys at a BBQ, just kickin' it with some girls. No police, drinking, maybe smoking. Just kicking with hella people eating.

Another thing that makes me happy is being with my family at a party with all my cousins just kickin' it, eating.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Those things make us happy too — just kicking it, nothing to worry about, and enjoying the laughter that surrounds us. You can go back to those times once you get out. And the next time you think about doing something stupid, ask yourself if losing all that is worth it.

Statistics

Every day in America, a mother dies giving birth
Her child grows up questioning his or her worth.
Every day in America, five youth commit suicide
Life got too hard. They couldn't hang in the ride.
Every day in America, eight youth are killed by a firearm
A peaceful neighborhood-turned war zone puts everybody at harm.
Every day in America, 33 youth die from accidents
Accidents. They die from preventable incidents.
Every day in America, 77 babies die before their first birthday
How much they love their parents, they'll never get to say.
Everyday in America, 192 youth are arrested for violent crimes
So much hate, so much rage in them. They don't think about serving time.

Every second in America, a public school student is suspended
Things would be different if they were a little more motivated.
Every 11 seconds in America, a high school student drops out
They give up on themselves with a mind full of doubt.
Every 20 seconds in America, a youth is arrested
Maybe they would have done things different if they weren't peer pressured.
Every 36 seconds in America, a baby is born into poverty
The consequence of parents that weren't really ready.
Every minute in America, a baby is born to a teen mother
Things get complicated when the mother hates the baby's father.
Every four minutes in America, a youth is arrested for drug abuse
It's a battle against stress and peer pressure that they quickly lose.

-Samuel

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing with us this information Samuel. We're not sure if you're using real statistics, or just making some incredibly important points, but either way, you have found truth in these words. Are there ways you can advise anyone to deal with the peer pressure and stress that leads to such dire consequences? How do you deal with it?

Missing Piece

My missing piece is my family right now. Every time I think about my family I feel a blank space in my life! Without my family I'm bored. Especially the big missing piece, I'm missing is my Jefita! I miss her so much! I can't wait to get out and fill in my missing pieces to my puzzle!! Pues alrato!

-Duende

From The Beat: Good luck Duende! We hope once your puzzle is put back together again, you won't lose that piece of the puzzle that is the heart of it.

Listen to Me

As days goes by
I wish I could fly
Up, up and away
To a more beautiful day.

And skies are gray
I just get on one knee and all night I pray
"Our Father Jesus Christ" is what I say
Hoping for a better day.

Wishing for my pain to go away
Tired of this stress
Need a lot more rest
I really can't take it.

Tryin' not to give up
But stressin' my baby
Is just not me
I want my child to be

The best he can be
I am not going out because
I want to succeed
Please give me some help for the best of me.

-Clarence

From the Beat: Something beautiful is going on inside you, Clarence. We're not sure what has set this introspection in such motion, but we can see it with every week of writing you produce. You're feeling some fear because you've put your feet down on a different path, and you don't know where it leads. But that's all right. That's called faith — believing in a future you can't see, and trusting in a power bigger than you that you can't prove. We promise that if you keep questioning, keep struggling to understand, keep wanting to be on the side of your God, things can only get better.

An Unfinished Puzzle?

The pieces that I'm missing are: my one-year-old daughter. I haven't see her for two years because all that time I been locked up. Now that I get out, I'm going to try all my best to get that lil' piece of mine back which is my daughter and when I get it back I'm not going to break that into pieces ever again.

-Drifter

From The Beat: Don't try your best, do you best. Your daughter needs you more than the streets need you. You don't want her growing up watching you in and out of jail, right? We do have one question though. How can you say you haven't seen her for two years if she's just one year old?

Who You Mad At?

The only person, I am mad at
Is myself, for making me suffer
And making me go threw it.
I am the only person I can depend on
And I mess it up. All because of me.
All because my selfishness and that's
The only person that mess it up.
It was all by myself.

-Maniac

From The Beat: As human beings, we all have selfish times. Yet, some selfishness cause a lot. Don't blame your too much for that is going on. Just do your best and make the best out of the time you have now and set a plan for yourself to achieve when you get out.

Your Smile

One of the things that makes me smile
Is your smile, that drives me wild.
We've been together for a long time,
An' for you I'm making this rhyme.
I love you baby, an' I need you by my side.
When I get out, we will ride with pride.
I want to be with you 'till the day I die.
I'm telling you the truth, this is not a lie.
You're the only one that believes in me,
When nobody else would even trust me.
With you, out there I was hella happy.
Now I'm locked up looking hella crappy.
Think of you is what I do all night,
Readin' your letters telling me, "everything will be all right."
I remember the last time we talked on the phone,
You sounded so sad 'cause I was gon' leave you alone.
But don't trip baby, 'cause I'll be out soon,
An' we'll make love under the light of the moon.

-Magik

From The Beat: Which means more to you, this wonderful girl or the things you did to let the system take you from her? It's not your words that will give us the answer, but your deeds. If you continue to do what you've been doing, then you're inviting the same consequences, which include separation from her. That will be your answer. But if she means all that you say she does, you'll find a way to change your act so that you can live in freedom with her by your side. Sometimes, even those we love and who love us can only take so much until they are fed up. Cherish what you have with this girl, and don't leave her side again.

I Don't Love You

I don't love you, but I like you
I don't love you, but I'm feeling you
I don't love you because love ain't my thang
Love is not the right thang to function within my eyes
I'ma money getta, and that's the only thing I love
Including my fam bam
All that boyfriend and girlfriend thang also ain't what I function with in my eyes,
Because that shhh is a pain in my heart...
That's why I say...
I don't love you, but I like you
I don't love you, but I'm feeling you
Love is a really hurting feeling because my heart gets broken every time I'm in love
That's why I only love my fam bam, and getting money
Because I know fo' sure I won't get hurt by just doin' what I do,
And I'm gonna stay eatin' and shining regardless,
So peep this out, if you in love, please be 100% sure yo "nuk nuk" is the right one you really in love with
Before you is the one to get hurt
That's why I do my thing and stay getting my cheese
Keepin' my family happy, 'cause they the only ones I can stand.

-Tati

From The Beat: So we guess that it doesn't hurt for you to let yourself get locked up where strangers control your every move, since that is one of the certain consequences of loving money the way you do... And speaking of making money, where's that cheese going now? You're making it, all right, but it's not going into your pockets, it's going into the system's pockets. Every time you change hands — from the police to the judge to the PO to the counselors in the hall, someone makes a little something off you. We know they must be grateful to you for helping them buy their cars, their houses, and their children's education. You may choose not love anyone for fear of getting hurt, but by choosing not loving yourself enough to cherish this great gift of freedom, you're hurting yourself in much more profound ways. Time heals broken hearts, but time cannot heal itself. Once lost, it's lost forever.

What Happens Every Day

6:30 A.M.
Mama struggling to make ends, too, for her newborn to come,
Health care, more like ransom,
Belly full, then she's got contractions,
As quick to hospital as she can, first reaction,
They take her to ER, the baby was born,
Lack of previous health care, Mama died, baby's life too
Now baby's neglected, orphan girl all alone,
She's afraid and has to wait for a foster home...

8:57 A.M.
A young boy cries, he's teased at school, he decides that life is over
Things will never be cool,
He runs to the bathroom and looks at his wrist,
He grabbed a knife from his pocket, and... the last moment of his life
Blood came down as he unclenched his fist...

11:43 A.M.
Boys call themselves men, they live life like a war,
Someone killed their friend and they settled the score,
Problem crossfire occurred clipped a baby's face,
Now, they're on trial for double murder and they won't win the case...

2:28 P.M.
Hate and rage, rage and hate, only 2:28,
All choices, that means it's not fate,
News just reported another rape,
Only 2:28

4:23 P.M.
About now people starve, homeless living in lard,
People walk by them and see filth,
Man named Joe (homeless man) feels guilt,
His choices led to him being seen as filth...

8:29 P.M.
Twenty minutes ago mom left him,
He was found late, police took him to the station,
He was in a bad part of town, and he's wearing a
Frown, taken into the Hall, where he met Mr. Brown...

11:30 P.M.
Sherry's been clean for a year; she's been locked up,
No support when she got out, so she picked up a blunt,
People say it's cool, she's off probation,
Desperately, she wants to stop but she's weak to temptation...

-Andrew

From The Beat: Wow, this is a great, yet, sad and cruel piece that betrays the reality of the world we live in. You have a talent with pencil and paper. You also have a great imagination and knowledge of reality, and the ability to convey it. Keep writing what you see.

I always would want to be with my grandma. I felt safe next to her.

Cruel Intentions

I got terminology that'll bury ya body, see
In life, you gotta keep this thing movin'
Stayin' away from bad places and evil doings
Gang violence and street shootings, better stop now or it's gonna be you in...
...A coffin placed six feet deep, 'cause you didn't listen, instead decided to creep
But one thing, I only have myself to blame, 'cause cruel intentions internally I couldn't tame
If I could run it back, it wouldn't be the same
I'd have prouder parents instead of hiding in shame
It used to be puff, puff passin', but one thing about that, is you gonna finish last in
But I've decided to not be, instead, I ought to be out there in freedom
'Cause I miss my family, I wish I could see em'
So I'm gonna cut it here and say that I stay strapped
And the only one I have is myself to be mad at.

-Mikhael

From The Beat: You say you miss your family, yet, you end it saying you stay strapped! How does this show any change at all? How will this keep you in freedom? We think there needs to be some more basic change from deep within you, and we hope it comes before you realize the mistake you're making. Think about it!

My Thinking #2

Damn, I'm still incarcerated and it seems that the closer I get to freedom, the slower the days seem to pass. Still no letter from my moms or girl. Forget it. I'll get over it just like I do any other time. Hey, maybe they decided to forget about a ninja or God is punishing me for my past sins.

Staff today burned my room today, but they didn't find whatever they was looking for because as I've said about a million times I'm trying to stay clear of drama or any kind of trouble so that I get a good court report.

I cried the other night, not physically but mentally, because I no longer feel that I'm able to withstand the harshness of my reality. I'm in freaking jail, literally. Do I want to be? But I have to for a crime I regret. The crime I regret is not being arrested for robbery, it's for allowing my ego to be influenced. I'm in here for trying to prove myself just like the majority of us in here.

Got on the phone the other day, had a nice conversation with my Auntie. She tells me that my lil' cousin is doing good in school and sports wise.

As I sit in my dark room, I close my eyes and think about when I was little and didn't have a worry in this world. I would think how I always would want to be with my grandma. I felt safe next to her. Then I say in a whisper: "Damn! Where did shhh go wrong...?"

(To be continued.)

-Clarence The Twin

From The Beat: Clarence, we've all made mistakes in the past, and we will continue to make mistakes because we are human. But asking yourself the question, "Where did shhh go wrong?" is truly the beginning of an answer. You may not be able to pinpoint a moment where, had you turned right instead of left, you could have avoided everything. But even if you can't answer the question with that kind of specificity, just the question leads to new understandings — of yourself, of your family, of your community and your place in it, and of your goals and how to reach them. Keep asking, and we think some of the answers that are eluding you will become clearer. As you seek, you shall find...

My Dad

A happy thought is my dad. He died when I was about five years old.

-Abel

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about that Abel. Do you have any memories with him? What are some of your other happy thoughts? You can do better than two short sentences in one hour!

The Life Of Me

You don't know where I've been and I don't know about you, neither
But in both our lives, I know we can find parts that are similar.
The student you see carrying books every day at school is me
You see what I want you to see. Not the person that I used to be
Not the person that barely graduated high school with a C.

Now, I plan to transfer to Cal Berkeley. I'm proud to say that too
But realize I'm no better than you. You have the same chances I do.
If no one has ever told you you could be somebody, let me be the first
Nobody ever told me till now, and to realize it too late is the worst.

I haven't lived long on this earth, but I've lived long enough
I've lived a life that's been hard and tough.

I realize that we give up too easy
Especially when we are challenged academically.
We choose to be stupid and uneducated. But it is not the result of our genetics
We just need to be motivated and stop adding to the statistics.

People constantly talk about how many "great minds" we lose to abortion
But I believe we lose much more in these types of institutions.
When I look out at all of you, I see the future of our generation
We could be so great if we just had enough motivation.

In the community you're from, in a world hooked on material luxuries
The people that should have been there for you may have been too concerned with money.
But you are no longer there. You're all here in the hall
The staff around here will be there for you when you fall.
When my hopes were down and my mind filled with doubts
Staff was there to help me out. Some even wrote letters to try to get me out.

Regardless of what you want to do
I guarantee they'll be there to support and motivate you.
It may not be much, but it's all we really need
Tough love and a little motivation to succeed.

That's what this juvenile hall has done for me
And that's what I want to do for my community.
On February 2nd 2007. I recall my Elm 6 Program with Mr. D
In it, we questioned what was to be of our legacy.
My legacy, if I were to leave the world today, would paint an ugly picture
More negatives than positives in my life are a very bad mixture.
But at each milestone in life, comes a fresh start
So don't give up when you slip, have some heart.

Be that person that reached places people never thought you could go
Be that person that everybody in the world respects and knows.
Go back to your childhood days and relive those dreams
The impossible is nothing but a little more difficult than what the possible seems.

What you've seen on TV is fake. I was running with the best.
My past is written by the scars on my body and the dragon on my chest.
I'm no longer proud of what I've done in my past
Maybe you still are. But I guarantee it won't last.
Not when you face what I face.
You're gonna wish you never caught that case.

So don't hesitate the next time opportunity knocks
You gotta get up and do something. You gotta stop living in a box.
If you wait too long it might be too late
Don't wait for luck and don't believe in fate.
Remember, you have a chance to be great.

-Samuel

From The Beat: You not only have a chance to be great, Samuel, it seems clear that you are determined to grab that chance and run with it! It is to our misfortunate not to have you in class because we believe you are a wonderful teacher and leader, judging from what you have written. You speak from the heart and you share your wisdom with others. We're very curious to know how someone who thinks as deeply as you — and who knows the value of his own life and education — got led down the wrong path, and what made you see the light? We hope whatever situation you are in right now, everything will go the way you want.

Who You Mad At?

I am mad at my PO because he said he was going to send me back to camp, and he didn't. He recommended ROP, and that's where I'm going to be going now. I just don't know if to run or not because it's too long.

-Chris

From The Beat: Here are your choices Chris: If you run, you will have to be on the run until you get caught. That means hiding out, always looking over your shoulders and/or maybe not even being able to be with those that you love, and certainly not for very long. And when you get caught, you are going to have to do more time because you ran. What is the difference between that and being locked up? On the other hand, if you just do your time at ROP, when you are done and back in the free world, you don't have that much to worry about. Plus, who knows, you might actually learn some new skills that will help you maneuver through the world. And one more plus, that time will give a chance to grow up, because thinking about running tells us that you need to do some more maturing. A program and time can help you there. The choice is up to you. We recommend you just do your time and get it over with.

Yo Trate De Cambiar

Una vez trate de cambiar mi vida, pero no pude porque no supe como empezar. Lo que me llebo a cambiar mi vida fue cuando mataron a mi primo y porque mi familia me decía que yo cambiara. Ahora lo que me detiene a cambiar mi vida es mi barrio y mis homies.

Aveces me gusta la vida que llebo por todos los desmadres que hago con todos los homies, pero lo malo es que con esta vida que llebo, puedo ver como pierden la vida varios homies.

From The Beaty: Es dificil pero poco a poco se puede hacerlo. No te detengas. Si tu corazón desea ser otra persona, sigue a tu corazón que es lo más importante que todo. Ahorita estas pasando en la etapa en la cual tienes que dejar la vida que llebas o seguirla y terminar tu vida en mal estado. Nosotros hemos conocidos muchas personas que han estado en tu situaciones, es más aqui trabajan unos cuantos de ellos, y ellos han salido adelante. Todo es posible en esta vida cuando se quiere de corazón. Es tu vida, no la de ellos. Piensa en lo tuyo y deja vivir la de ellos.

I Tried To Change

One time, I tried to change my life, but I wasn't able to because I didn't know how to start. What led me to change my life was when they killed my cousin and because my family would tell me to change. Now what is holding me back from changing my life is my 'hood and my homies.

Sometimes I like the life that I lead because of all the crazy things I do with all the homies, but the bad thing is that with this life that I lead, I can see how so many homies lose their lives.

-Pelón

From The Beat: It's difficult, but little by little, you can do it. Don't hold yourself back. If your heart longs to be another person, follow your heart, which is the most important thing above everything else. Right now, you're going through a phase, in which you have to leave the life that you lead or continue it and finish your life in a bad state of being. We have met many people who have been in your situation, and some of these people have even worked for us, and they have come out striving forward. Everything is possible in this life when one longs for it with all one's heart. It's your life; not theirs. Think about what's best for you and let others live their lives.

Perdon Mom

Perdoname por todo lo que he hecho mal, y lo más importante, por hacerte sufrir, por caer preso, pero te prometo que una vez que salga de aqui I'll make it up for you. Te voy a obedecer.

From The Beat: Esperamos que sepas cumplir tu promesa. Si la rompe, va a ser más doloroso para ella. Te lo aseguramos. Es hora de hacer llorar a tu madre, pero de alegría.

Sorry Mom

Forgive me for all the bad things that I have done, and the most important, for making you suffer, for getting locked up, but I promise you that once I get out of here, I'll make it up to you. I am going to obey you.

-Fabían

From The Beat: We hope that you know to fulfill your promise. If you break it, it is going to be more painful for her. We guarantee you. It is time for you to stop making your mother cry tears of pain, but rather of joy.

My Soul's Been Replenished

If I could write my whole life on paper, please believe books will be filled up
Layer by layer
A recording of time, with a broken tape player
Vengeance rises by tha second so I say a lil' prayer
Enemies wanna see my downfall
But that time will never come
Nope, not at all
I'm a one hit wonder, I thought you knew
You'll be amazed once you see all the things I could do
Yeah, I admit to having my share of being a menace
But while being locked up my soul been done replenished
Take a walk in my shoes and I guarantee
You couldn't handle one second of what it takes to be me
Life is beautiful, life is a struggle.

-Tl

From The Beat: We all have been through a lot in our lives, and sometimes by placing it on paper and sharing it with others, it can help to move us out of the rut we're in and move us forward. So, we encourage you to share with us and the readers of The Beat, your experience and life story. And tell us what you mean when you write that your soul has been replenished since you got locked up. How will that change your future?

Jobs I've Had

One accomplishment that I'm proud of that I made in life is that I had gotten a job at 14 and a half. Even though it was a job walking around asking people can I cut their grass. But even though it wasn't a real job, but I was making money and staying out of trouble. Also after that job I had gotten a job at the Oakland Zoo working full time in the summer.

And that was at the age of sixteen. And I was working food service and rides area.

-Baby Guntha

From The Beat: Many people twice your age haven't even ever had one job, and here you are, you already had two. And yes, they were both "real" jobs, no doubt. What will your next one be, do you have any ideas?

Who You Mad At?

i'm mad at my dad
because he was not there
for sixteen years and never
asked if i was all right
or if i was doing good in school
or if i ever had a kid
or if i was good at sports
and i'm mad at my baby'mama
for gettin' a court order
to see my girl
and i'm mad at myself
for getting myself in this

-angry young son

From The Beat: Now it's on you to be a better dad than your dad was to you. We're a little confused about the court order part. Who got a court order for what? Maybe write a story about it. While you're here though, don't get mad — get right!

Happy Thoughts

i'm happy that i got a seed
that i can call mine
and that my family and me
seen my kid's birthday
before i got in here
and my nephew's birthday
and i'm happy that i been clean
for a week.

-young father

From The Beat: Now the test is to stay clean when you're out, so you can be a good father to your child. It will take determination and commitment to make your money legally and thus guarantee you stay free to be a good daddy.

Remembrance

I remember the time I got my first car. I'm currently sixteen, and I got my car at sixteen. It wasn't too long ago, and I remember it so well, it's as if I can see that look of surprise on my face.

I was so surprised!I looked at that car and seen that it was a what'ch'ama'gigi NX Nissan —all white with colorful strips in it. I was so surprised that my mom would even want to get it for me. Then Moms said, "I got another surprise for you!" And I said, "What?"

I remember her next words almost as if it was yesterday: "Another car." But this car I couldn't drive at all, 'cause I can't drive it 'till I am eighteen years old. It's an eighty-seven Acura legend with twenty-two inch spike rims — and I was hella mad I couldn't drive it! I remember this thought as if it was only yesterday.

-Dwaye

From The Beat: We feel the intensity of your emotions, getting your first car. And then, at the same moment: your second car! Yet you say you were angry because you have to wait to drive the second one. Well, we can see how it was all coming so fast, it must have felt confusing — but mad? You do see how very fortunate you were to be given even the older Nissan, right? We're just wondering: Does your tendency to flash with anger have anything to do with your being incacerated today? You can't drive either while you're here — what does that say?

Who you mad at?

I'm mad at myself because I refused to listen to my Mama's. She always told me to not to be driving around smoking and without a driver's license. And I just hate being in this kind of situation. Damn... What I mean is, in this Hall. Take care, y'all.

-Lil' Daddy

From The Beat: Regret is a miserable emotion, but it's also a powerful tonic – next time you feel like going against your Mama's advice, you'll have this memory to keep you in check... if you choose to hold on to the memory.

Proud Of Going Home

I am proud of myself because now I'm going home. I got my home passes and that's all I wanted, because the time goes by faster because you be spending more time with your family and your friends. That's why I'm proud of myself, because I got what I wanted and this week I get my Friday so it's going to be all good. I'm gonna holla at you next week.

-Slot

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting those home passes. By the time this piece runs, you'll have had a chance to see what it's like being home and, whether it makes things easier up in camp (or does home drama bring you down?). Let The Beat know!

Your Eyes

When I'm with you I don't need any diamonds or pearls,
'Cause when I look in your eyes
I feel like I've got the world
But when I'm without you
I feel like a lost and lonely man with nothing to my name,
Not even a grain of sand.

-Lil' Taz

From The Beat: This little poem has heart and soul/means more to a true love than diamonds are gold/get out of jail soon and when you do/ prove to your woman that your love is true!

Not Overnight

Mostly I'm mad at myself because I messed my life up. By not going to school, hustling, smoking and mostly by getting caught up in the system. At the same time it's not too late to change but there's more to it because you can't just change overnight. It takes motivation and courage to change your habits (smoking, grinding) and immature ways.

-Carl

From The Beat: Change doesn't happen overnight, that's for damn sure. It sounds like you've already thought about this a lot – when you say there's more to it, what do you mean. Motivation, courage, definitely, and now what about support? Do you also have that? Family, a program, friends who are pretty positive?

Dear Beat

This is yo' boy Momo. I'm here for my fourth placement. I ain't tripping though. I'm still mobbing.

Yeah, though — I got caught on the block, but I didn't catch a case. Someone told them I was pimping! So the judge said he don't like pimps, and the next time I come back I'm going to YA!

But I ain't tripping. I was on the outs eating! On one! Yeah, though — I'm going to miss the 'hood.

-Momo

From The Beat: If tripping is what it would take to make you take a break from life in that fast lane, then start tripping hard! 'Cause that fast track brings you back faster each time for a longer time away from the 'hood. Keep mobbing like this, and you'll get yourself put away for good, meaning, for life. Before you lose everything for one more fling, trip hard! Change before you're stuck like Chuck behind steel bars.

Hello

What's crackalackin'? Well this that vato Dimples. Back in the Hall 'cause I ran from my group home. Well just wanted to say hello. Because I ain't got really nothing to talk about, well yeah so to all them people whining about being locked up, damn – don't do the crime if you can't do the time. Con esas palabras, los dejo. This boy is out. Alratos.

-Dimples

From The Beat: Man, we're happy to have your writing, but sorry you got caught back up... why did you run? What was going on at the group home? Was it drama in their, or missing your life on the outs. Tell us!

On The Block

real things on the block
you can't snitch
can't bend
can't fold]
you sell drugs in the cold
smokin' weed
it's dope, feel me
ninjas on the block
know what it is
you got to live
pop a thizz
ninjas on the beat
y'all be lyin' man
keep it true
you dig

-No Love

From The Beat: We cut the one word that called out your turf loud and clear to anyone who understands. That aside — what does popping an ecstasy pill have to do with "you got to live" other than it rhymes? How much time are you willing to trade for a few months at a time of living that life? Do you want to be living like this ten years from now, in and out of jail? Why? Give "no love" get no love!

Can't Wait

can't wait until i get a job
can't wait for the day
my baby is born
can't wait for the day
i graduate
can't wait until the day
they say, "you're released"

-David

From The Beat: It's funny how we say we "can't wait" when we know that's exactly what we have to do. Just wondering, are you locked up because you couldn't wait long enough to make your pay the right way — legally? With a baby on the way, use this time to get yourself ready for the day you're released, so you can stay free and be the best daddy you can be!

Yesterday and Tomorrow

yesterday:
if it ain't green
ya ain't on my team
got infrra-red beams
on all my machines
i get money on the block
by serving fien's
tryin'a blow up in the game like gasoline
feds want me but i keep
running like a river down stream
at night i have more nightmares than dreams
tomorrow:
if i pray to the lord without the rings
one day i'll probably get to be
the next martin luther king

-D-tay

From The Beat: Not much here about Martin Luther King's dream, just those nightmarish schemes that have you flossing killing machines 'cause that fast money from serving fiends will have you dead or caught up by the feds and locked away for life instead. Look where you are now! Pray as if it all depends on God but act as if it all depends on you — so what's your plan to come new?

Mad

i'm mad at the judge
'cause he ain't tryin'a let me thug
chillin' in the streets
duckin' and dodgin' slugs
going bad on other thugs
i'm mad at pops
'cause he gone on drugs,
the knock's mad
givin' me mugs,
'cause i won't give him his morning
cream
now i'm on the block
scopin' wit' the beam
'cause i'm all about my green

-Swagga Juan

From The Beat: Look at you now: no empty pockets 'cause you got no pockets at all! You and your dad are both addicted to drugs — him to using, you to sales, and you'll both end up in jails! Mad at the judge? What? You think you have a right to run around at night with a gun? Last week a four-year-old girl got shot to death by someone — who was mad about somethin' to do with green. That girl would be alive and you'd be free, if thugs'd get their guns off the street and make money legally!

Baby Girl

Hey baby girl what's your name
Let me talk to you
Let me buy you a drank
You know me
Convict music baby girl oooh wee
I know the club close late
What's the chance of you rolling with me
We go have fun
You gone see
Off that patron you should get like me.

-Erin

From The Beat: Aren't you a little young to be going to clubs? And the next time you give us such a b-s piece, we'll send it back to you to give it to the person whom you are talking to. Use The Beat to teach young one!

Live It the Right Way

When I get out I'm going to make a change in my life, by not doing stupid stuff that's going to get me into trouble. I'm going to get a job and go to school.

I'm just going to live it the right way, spend time with my family and work on my basketball game a little more. This is a good experience to be in though, because it's making me think about a lot of stuff. But most of all, it makes me realize I'm just glad to be alive. Thank you.

-Lil' Larry

From The Beat: Yes, be glad you're still alive, and be glad you have another chance at getting life right. Life in the fast lane leads to an early death or a life of pain. So don't go dumb, go smart — take advantage of your chance to make a new start!

Speaking

I be having chances to speak
but I be shy to speak in front of people
I don't know that well and it don't come out
'cause I be too shy for it to come out
so that's why when I got a chance to speak
I can't
that's why it's bad when people come around
'cause I might just smash on them
fast like a nascar super charge.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: Do you mean that you get frustrated when people approach you because you can't seem to say what you mean? Is it just groups of people that you feel tongue tied in front of, or is it speaking in general that makes you nervous? A lot of people have to overcome their anxieties or shyness when dealing with others, and we're sure that if you work on it, it will become easier for you. Try not to think too much about what's going to come out of your mouth or how it's going to sound. Also, we wonder about the smashing part, control yourself or seek help!

How Would I Tell a Love One

What it do Beat, this Lil' Damani, now I've been in here for a month and some days. Today I'm going to talk about how I would tell someone who doesn't know. One thing I would tell a love one is never come here but that's the same thing my pops told me, but I still come.

If I have kids I'm gonna make sure they won't come here and be like me 'cause if I keep scrapin in this rout I'm gone be out... out to prison, but I got a decision to not come

back 'cause I don't want to go through that. Stay safe, I'm out.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: It seems like a lot of your peers have similar stories—one or both of their parents have been in and out of jail and tell them to stay out. Why don't those warnings work? What do you think would work better?

What's Up, Beat?

It's Scarface from Richmond, just doing my time so I get out and move on with my life. I want to get through school so I can start new.

I have eight days till court. So I hope I get out of here, and at least sent to a group home, so I can finish my program and do good. To all incarcerated youth out there: Stay up, be safe and stay out of trouble. To my hina: I love you and miss you — I'll be home soon. Alrato!

-Scarface

From The Beat: Every piece in The Beat is to everyone, not just to your homeboys. With that said, here you are in Camp reading your piece and this response. Stick to that good plan, so you can be home with your girl and remain a free man!

Home

i want to go home
give me my freedom

-No Name

From The Beat: The key is staying free. Quit volunteering for this slavery. Take responsibility for your part and make a new start.

Who You Mad At?

I'm mad at myself, because I keep putting myself in this place! I'm mad at myself, because I know I can choose a better life — but instead it seems I'd rather be on the corner smoking weed and shooting dice.

My life is nothing nice! In this Oakland streets you got to think twice, 'cause if you say the wrong thing to the wrong person on the wrong day, you might just lose your life.

Now it's up to me whether I choose to roll the dice or change my life.

-Turk

From The Beat: You're old enough to know, those dice are loaded — boxcars or snake eyes, if you continue to throw 'em! It's no longer a game of chance when it's only a matter of time. Stay on the grind and you know how it will end: locked up in the pen' or dead before you're twenty-seven. Where do you want to be in ten years time? Don't get mad, get right. It's life or death, a bullet takes your last breath or slow suicide serving life in the system, in and out or just in. Now, begin again!

Family

Like my dad he ain't never been there for me because
he been back in fourth
to jail. And I need him because my mom can't teach me
how to become a man.

-Erin

From The Beat: What does it mean to you to become a man? Even though your father isn't around, you can still take steps toward maturing and taking responsibility for your actions (both things that help in growing into a man or woman).

Wanted To Blow Up

I wanted to say something very bad when we was in
class. A guy talked about my
mom but I was already in trouble so I didn't say nothing
to get in anymore
trouble.

-Erin

From The Beat: Good for you.

Thug Life

I got good friends and I got criminal friends, tell you the
truth. I don't
like hanging with my good friends because people say
they are suckas.

-Erin

From The Beat: We're hope you're being honest with yourself, and we hope you can try not to base your decisions on what other people say. Your criminal friends may seem cooler to you, but what's so cool about being in jail?

Clearing My Name

The thought of clearing my name from the system and getting my life back on track makes me really happy because I know I can do it. It'll take time and a lot of patience but if I work and work I can fulfill my innermost wants and dreams.

-Carl

From The Beat: The six words that matter most in this piece are "I know I can do it." If you're sure of that, and you have the way-down deep confidence and desire to make them true then you're way more than halfway there.

May Date

Today I'm going to talk about getting released in two months, in May. I just can't wait to get the heck out of here and do my thing. No more messing up. I got to try to turn myself around and get legit, right quick. I'm solid about getting off probation and start my life all over. I'm just countin' down, stay up and RIP to my fallen ninjas.

-Twan

From The Beat: This is great, to hear that your release is coming up. But you know, you don't have to wait to start your life over, you can do it right now, even while you're in camp, can't you? What if you – 1. Ask yourself whether your playing camp straight or still acting shady on the side 2. Take advantage of all the tutoring and programs and support that staff has for you while you're in here (Cornerstone, Youth Radio, etc)? Isn't that part of making life better?

Mad at Myself

I'm mad at myself because my birthday is this Sunday and I'm going to be here. I can't even get no girls, and I'm hella mad right now I'm gon' try to make the best out of this, but my happy thoughts are when I think about my girl and when I used to be getting it. I miss those days, and my other happy thoughts is when I used to be riding around the town, doing hella shhh, smoking hella weed..., them my happy thoughts.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: Here's what we worry about. Some of your happy thoughts are the kinds of memories that lead people into unhappy situations, like jail. Smoking weed is illegal, doing "hella shhh" could mean all sorts of things that might cause trouble. Do you have happy memories that AREN'T illegal? Because those are the memories that it's safest to repeat when you're out.

Sound Track

This is my soundtrack from the heart
I stay outside after dark
and I disrupt at the park
even though the cops is out
I'm still a young savage running the street
but I'm 'bout to close, and I hope y'all
publish this.

-Rose

From The Beat: We hope your days of disrupting and getting caught by cops are over.

Happy Thoughts

Happy thoughts that make me smile, the memories I have when I think of old memories of me and my friends. The old memories of the people I know some of them make me laugh.

When I think other happy thoughts is when I think about my freedom, think about money and what I'm going to do when I get through my situations.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: We've seen your laugh, and we're dying to know what some of those memories are of you and your friends that would make you smile for. Why don't you write one down for The Beat and share the good feelings?

Makes Me Think...

Bein' in jail makes me think, it makes me think about my life, future and dreams, hopin' I can get a second chance to go to my regular life, I'm tryin' to have kids and a wife and live how I live, cause life is too short.

Anything can happen at anytime, just like how I was just wit' my family at one moment, on the next moment I'm in jail, a place called hell.

-J-Money

From The Beat: It's true, nothing in life is guaranteed... except maybe how solidly we feel good about what we're doing in the moment. Can you tell the difference, on the outs, between when you're doing things that are good for you and doing things that are bad for you? What kinds of things can help you walk that path towards a "regular life." Wife, kids, and also – what about a job you like? That might be something worth thinking about too – if you could be doing any job in the world, what would it be? Do you need to go to school to get trained for this job? And is going to school something you want to do? Like you said, it's time to make plans on how to stay away from this "place called hell"

Who You Mad At?

Who am I mad at? I am mad at hella ninjas that hate. Even though my mom always told me, "Let a ninja hate. It'll get you more girls and it'll have more people who would respect you." I understand why ninjas hate because I'm the better man. I be fly and that's why ninjas hate on me. I'm that boy who get money. My big bra still getting it. I wonder why ninjas wanna hate on me? I wonder why I am mad when I find out? And it's the ninjas that killed my brother. That wasn't cool. I miss my little ninja. He was my right hand man but you know, ninjas like to hate when you getting money, or when you is pimping. But yeah, that's who I am mad at, the haters.

-Julius

From The Beat: A lot of people will "hate" or dislike you for whatever reason. When it comes down to it, that's on them and you can't control that. What you can control is yourself and how you respond to situations? Since you know those type of people are out there, you're better off, because you know who to avoid. Sorry to hear about your little brother and hopefully you can learn something valuable from what happened to him, that you can apply to your own life.

Stay Solid

This is lil' youngster from the max unit. I just wanted to say what's up! If you reading this don't trip I'm staying solid. I wanna leave already because it's hella boring in here. But my last court date is on March second, and I hope they say something good like group home or E.M. release.

Well Beat I will talk to you later, and all in the Hall do your time and stay solid. Keep your head up. All right, later Beat.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You use the expression "stay solid" so many times that we decided to make it your title. But also we want to know what that means to you... does it mean staying true to your homies? To yourself? What does it mean in terms of your future life when you finally get out of the hall?

Random Thoughts

I want to be successful when I get out of jail. My main goal is to finish school and try to go to a college. But in the future I would really love to have a career. Every day I need to thank god for giving me a chance.

I need to remember that I came in jail for a very serious charge, 5 counts including attempted murder -- and God gave me a second chance because he knows that I'm a better person than that. From being in jail has been a learning experience for me, not just a physical learning experience, but a mental learning experience.

I've learned that my family has really done a lot for me, and now it's time for me to step up and be the responsible young man that I am, and show my family that I could make it in this lifetime so they would all be proud of me in the future. I would rather have my family know that I would be fine, than to know that my family worries about me all the time. Since I've been in jail a lot of sad things have happened to me. Not just me, but my family also...

What's good, this Lil Rascal. Damn it's 7:30 p-m right now. Me and the homies would be soaking, toking, and joking. Then after that we would be on our way down to the strip up on Santa Clara Avenue in downtown San Jose. I bet all the homies from the East bay are out on the strip right now. If they're not they gonna be there doin' it live, feel me. Some shhh...

All I know is that Mardi Gras in San Jose is yanking right now. Stay up.

-Lil Rascal

From The Beat: We put these two pieces together because we felt like they both went together. They're both a part of you, and they both drive you. You've suffered so much, and grown so much, while you've been in the system, and we think of you as a thoughtful talented writer with heart and courage. When you say "I know I'm a better person that that," it sounds like you are writing from deep inside your soul, and it sings with truth. At the same time, there's all those temptations, which you write about in the second part, "soaking, toking, and joking." It's like these two impulses are both pulling you in opposite directions – so we ask you, how do you reconcile the two parts of yourself. When you get out, will you be able to give up the "strip"...?

Court Tomorrow

I go to court tomorrow. I hope I get some good news. Whatever I get good, or bad, I need to hurry up and get out of here. So I'm just waiting.

-Dennis

From The Beat: It's good you're willing to accept whatever happens. Allow yourself the chance to think of what you'll do once free and come up with a solid game plan to make it happen. That will make your time worthwhile and beneficial. And we hope your game plan involves doing good/positive things that will keep you out.

Accomplishment

When I was in Juvenile hall I accomplished to respect my elders and I accomplished to follow discipline. I have accomplished to follow rules and regulations and be strong and just get through.

-Accomplisher

From The Beat: How does it feel to have accomplished those things? Do you feel like a more balanced and empowered person? You say you feel strong, what will you do with that new strength?

Mad At My Lawyer

What up Beat! This is Anthony from the Max unit. I am mad at my lawyer because he told me he could get me out on EM But now I'm going to a group home for eight months or one year. Maybe it's coo' that I'm going but my lawyer lied so now I'm gonna be mad at him until this is all over. When I go to court I hope something good happens. The DA stays hating on me because of my charges, but I ain't trippin' about it. If this group home is coo', then I'm gonna just pimp it and get out and be with my family. Then on the weekends go to my cousin's house and hook up with some females, and just kick it and lay low. And I wanted to say what's up to all in the hall doing their time . Stay solid and keep your head up. 'All right, then later.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Sorry about the complications with your lawyer. We hope that by the time this is printed, you'll have worked things out with him

A Chance To Speak, But You Can't

Yeah, when I was little I wanted to talk to some cute girl, and every time I'd see her I would want to speak to her, but my mind wouldn't let me. So every time I'd see her, I'd act like I'm too good for her!

But really I did not have no words for her. I'd see her and act like I was too ugly to talk to her. I would try to talk, but it was like a cat got my tongue!

Then this one time, I was looking at her and I was telling myself she was looking sexy. So I was thinking in my head, "What should I say to her?" I was walking up to her, and right when I got to her I suddenly was able to just speak my mind — and she told me that she was waiting for me to talk to her!

So there I was, really speaking to her, and I got through my fear that had me tongue-tied — I am not scared to talk to no girl!

-Lil' Fam'bam

From The Beat: That's a good story. Isn't it a trip that when you care so much that it makes it hard for you to speak, those are the times when if you can find the courage to overcome your fear, they turn out to be the most important times for you to speak your mind — and that time, it all came out fine!

Mad At The World

i'm mad at the world
because i have a pearl
they want to run up in it
but I ain't wit it
i rather be on the block
drinkin' some privilege
servin' hella knocks
with my cap tilted
about to hop
in my box
on twenty-four's spinnin'
candy-apple paint
my shhh don't stank
slappin' hella hard
smokin' some dank
about to go pick up my potna tank
so we can go blow
the town down
now everybody know
who's wearing the crown
i'm the princess of oakland
it's where i'm from
and i'm not jokin'

-Aleshia

From The Beat: We only cut the last few lines, but we are worried about the mind that's showing signs of returning to the grind and the crew you used to kick it with too. It's called a false dilemma when you set yourself a choice between two things, when it's both of them you need to be rejecting. You know those aren't the only two choices! What happened to the voice in you that used to speak so true about what you knew you needed to do — change your life so you don't end up in the Y. You caught a big break! Now don't throw it away with the same old mistake. Rise above the past and make your freedom last — forever and ever, amen. It's time to start your life over again!

Tell Someone That Doesn't Know

you need to stop trying to act hard
when you're trying to puck a boy
who's not far from being a retard
talking about how you go
whip his ass
but everybody could see
through you like glass
you lucky i gave your ass a pass
because if that was my lil' brother
i would have been stomped your ass
you need to pick on somebody your own size
and i bet you'll be thinking whether you live
or die
you always the one sitting on the side
wishing it was your time to shine
but you and i know
you will always be on the sideline
making a little change
only selling dimes
coming back to jail
time after time
i'm tired of spitting this rhyme
'cause you just a waste of my time
next time i hope you're here to hear
my rhyme about bullying on other peers

-Aleshia

From The Beat: We all know you can spit some hard rhymes, and you did just that this time. And we agree with your assessment that picking on someone with no defense 'cause of size or disability (including developmentally delayed intelligence) is objectionable in every sense. But even a bully can learn that a reputation cannot be earned by preying on the weak 'cause it's just wrong — defending the weak is a clear sign of being strong. On the other hand, fighting fire with fire just makes the flames go higher; so we're glad you fought with words that seek to teach, even if you don't believe in this case that objective can be reached — the fact that you even tried gives her a chance to take it inside and let change start, 'cause it's not just matter a mind but also a matter of heart.

On The Outs

I feel like a wanted man because it's black on
black crime. On the streets
people are ready to start a fight; if I win they are
ready to go get their
gun or their big brother with his gun. That's
why it's not safe out there on
those horrible streets. Be safe.

-Erin

From The Beat: What do you think about black on black crime? What do you think would happen if, instead of the people in your community fighting and killing each over because of gang or turf wars, drugs or feuds, they came together to fight the system that keeps the cycle of violence, addiction and poverty running smoothly? What if you fought for better schools instead of fighting each other with bullets over dirty money and drugs?

My Situation

The situation that I'm in
is the judge is tryin' to make me lose and not win.
Basically he tryin' to do me and he say if I come back
he gone give me ten
so I gotta make a change and stop coming to the hell
place
because the route I'm scrapin I'm in first place
to go to the "Y"
but I got a chance to turn that around and turn that
frown to a smile
and do my time I know you like this rhyme
so publish it cause this flow on hit.
Peace love to everybody
stay safe
stay cool
stay solid
keep yo head up

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: We know you're too smart to let yourself get put away for ten—you need to take full advantage of the chance you've been given because it could very well be the last one you have to make that change. Remember too that you stand to gain the most from changing your perspective and reconsidering the path you want to take.

An Unfinished Puzzle

What it do Beat this Lil' Damani today I'm gonna write about my unfinished puzzle. My unfinished puzzle is me not listening to my parents and running over my mom. Now I learned to respect my mom 'cause no matter what happens she always there for me.

Hopefully when I get out I can stay out my group home in L.A. I'm gonna stay for my family. Until then I'm out, 'till next week holla at yo' boy.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: We know that you're trying to make some changes so we didn't bother to include the part where you told us where you're from. As far as we're concerned you're from your mother, who indeed deserves your respect and love. Next time tell us a little more about her. We wish you the best of luck at your group home and hope you keep writing while you're there.

I Make Movies

Some people want to be a doctor or a lawyer or even a gangster, but I can't see myself doing anything other than making movies.

I started making movies when I was three or four, when my dad bought me my first camera. Now I'm making big-time feature films with professional editors. I'm going to send them to film festivals so I can win money prizes.

-Keith

From The Beat: Film is certainly something learned by doing it, if successful filmmakers of the past can be used a predictor of the future. When you refer to "professional editors", do you mean professional editing equipment? As for film festivals: You can't win if you're not in!

Valentine's In the Hall

valentine's day in the hall
is not a joke
because i was in hall
for valentine's day
i was lonely
but my baby
was in here too
i was lonely
but again
i was not lonely
i could not kiss him
or get no flowers
while i was in the hall
and you see
what it do
to you and me

-Lil' Pooh

From The Beat: What a sweet, sad poem, with both of you locked up away from home unable to reach each other's arms. Now that you see what it means to chase those street dreams, dream of better things and stay free!

Not A Fantasy

five foot five, brown eyes
dark caramel-chocolate complexion
nice body, gangsta walk
'hood mentality
clean-cut, dippers, nice dress
just right
make all the other chicks go crazy
even though he was a hood boy
he knew what was really good
he kept me suited and booted
and stayed solid all through the hood
and there was no doubts in my mind
he was mine
i knew what he was into
and didn't really need a clue
knew he had a chick
but the beep wasn't it
just 'cause you knew he had already-ready hit
he always was around the corner
so of course he kept it lit
stayed wit' big thangs in the house
to let his chick know who was it
wonder what happened to boom
man he thought who was it
but now my baby gone
i wish he could've kicked
man i can't wait to go home
so we can do it big
hope to see nephew
so we can keep it lit
but now I'm gonna go
so i can do it big

-Turquoise Thang

From The Beat: Don't just let this time be wasted once you've already paid it. If you just go back to what you used to do and refuse to listen to wisdom from those who been trying to share it with you — you'll be back in the system with a quickness in all likelihood. But if not, go back to your old life style, and sooner or later you'll get got. Remember: just plain freedom is worth a lot! Don't do it big, do it slick — outsmart the system by going legit!

My Valentine? That Will Never Happen!

I'm a lover and a player! Why would I be having a Valentine date? Man, all I need is to run and gun. Ya Hear? Can ya dig?

All right, women, you gotta know why men gotta play their game, whoever they get. Women think Valentine's Day is something important, but it ain't — 'cause I'm gon' chase hottie honeys all around dis bay! You know what I'm sayin'?

Oh yeah, if y'all wanna talk to me about how to be a player: Here it's ... nah! You will never be a ghetto OG like me. All you can do is find yo' own style while I get my money!

-Birdman

From The Beat: We truly worry for you when you come like this. It's like you forget everything you've been learning about a need to change but instead come with more of the same mindset that got you locked up like this. Why would a dude ever brag about pimping? Yeah, we cut that. How would you feel if someone pimped your mother, your sister, your wife? You need to stop idolizing those ghetto OG's or you'll find yourself locked down with them in the state penitentiary. Don't use your disability as an excuse to engage in abuse! And don't feel you have to prove anything to fools even if they do talk about you, 'cause all you really need to do is prove to yourself that you can find a legal, legitimate road to success — just apply yourself to do-right and you'll pass the test to be the best you can be, and what's more, you'll stay healthy, happy, alive and free!

Mad At You

I'm mad at someone, you feel me?
I never harmed or went bad on him,
I always help him, and always was loyal.
I was loyal to my ninjas,
I would fight, get shot, get stabbed for my ninjas.
I'm solid, straight up, but when I went to jail, a ninja robbed my house,
talked behind my back, threatened my momma, man that ninja outta
pocket.
But when I talk to him on the phone it's, "Bra, I ain't did none of that
shhh!"

-President

From The Beat: There's no doubt, if true, this dude's actions were shady. But seriously, what did you expect? You've heard how "It's No Love in Oakland"... it's not about Oakland but about the fact that once you've stepped into a world of fighting, shooting, stabbing, you've also stepped into a world where betrayal is everywhere, and it's almost a guarantee. Street life is a life of every man for himself. The only way to keep out of it is to KEEP OUT OF IT, for real. Go legit! Break away! Find a new set of friends, discover what solid really means.

Who Am I Mad At?

i'm very, very hot-headed guy so
every time when people make me mad
i always beat them 'till they' blood flow'
for example when people tryin'a rob me from behind
i run them down and chase them 'round fo' a time
and i never give up 'till i catch them clowns
then i beat their smiles into frowns
i use bare-handed knuckles on whoever messin' with me
i knock them suckas down that was stressin' me
that's all I can take so i'm gon' remind you
don't mess wit' me foo' or it's yo' mistake

-Dizzy Birdman

From The Beat: What will it take to raise your mind up off the street? Week after week you continue to repeat the same savagery that's celebrated by fools who end up dead or in penitentiary SHU's! Who are you trying to impress? It's time to rise up out of that mess and learn a new way of life — the kind that will keep your free of the system and all this needless strife. We understand there are fools who will try to use your being deaf against you — sneak up from behind and try to mess with you, but unless you want to stay locked up you've got to know that resorting to violence will in the end get the best of you.

It's My Song Dreaming

Yo' baby! You wanna play wit' it? All right, let's play! I'll play rough, just as long as you wanna play along, girl. I know you like it!

You act like a cat, baby. I'm a dog, and I'm dogging on you! I know we just playing, just like puppy love. You know what I'm saying? If you wanna play fight, I'll let you play fight with me and I'll fight you, too. Let's see how you like it.

Oooh, man, it felt good! You crazy, wild and white. I shouldn't date a vanilla but only chocolate like me. But when you're around me, you don't play around. We can slap it all day! Let the music play! You listen to your man and we going play every which way we can! Girl, bounce for me! Just drop it like it's hot!

I'm all sweaty just thinking of you. Then I wake up, and it's my song — the one I sang all night long as I lay asleep. I love my theme song, it's tight! Maybe not right, but you need to see, it's my song dreaming me.

-Birdman

From The Beat: We made a few changes to move it from an R-rating toward PG, but in our dreams our libido is set free. However, to play fight in real life can lead to unhappy consequences, and some discover that no really means no, when they come to their senses. It's a new day, and both partners have to say yay, 'cause when there's hell to pay, it won't just go one-way. Yannamean? Of course, this was just your dream.

Hella Mad, Part 5

I'm hella mad right now, 'cause my girl just put like 50 dollars on my house phone and I used it all up on Friday in one day. I kept calling my house -- I was on the phone for like an hour. Them people be getting over, cause the next day I tried to call, it didn't go through and I was hella mad, so she is about to give me fifty more dollars to put on the phone, so that's gon' be eighty dollars to put on there so it should last at least three more weeks to a month so I'm cool now, you feel me? If you didn't know, now you do.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: Lil Rome, did you know that you start almost every piece you write with the same intro "I'm hella mad right now..." ? Even if you're writing about something cool, like here, where you say that your girl is helping out, it's like you always start off what you write with the same anger. So tell us, where does all this "hella mad" come from? Is it just part of being locked up? Is it because of stress you deal with back home? Or is it just that you're always feeling angry? What's the story behind Hella Mad?

Hard Times

I be having hard times like all the time. Especially, writing this thing with my broken arm. And sometimes, up in the room thinking about my families and of course my girl.

It's like most of the times I be stressing. I be stressing over them. Just thinking about what they doing right now and how they doing and all them other stuff.

I just can't wait to get out of here and see everybody out there. Right now, I'm just writing because I miss my families and my girl. But don't trip I will be out there soon. Peace out.

-Scott

From The Beat: Being cut off from loved ones is rough; we hope that you get out to stay out and rework your life so that you don't risk losing touch with them again, maybe for much longer.

I Wanna Get Out

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
I wanna get out,
and I bet you do too.

-Ali

From The Beat: Everyone may share the same thoughts as you as far as "getting out." But what you do once out determines whether you come back, or not. Do you share the same thoughts as others, doing the same things that will bring you back? Or do you stand on your own, do what's best for you and your future, and decrease your chances of coming back?

The Police

I'm mad at the police. Forget the Five-O. They be on that hatin' stuff. Hatin' on a ninja for doing what he do.

After that I'm mad at ninjas who be snitching. I hate weak ninjas that be foldin' under pressure. If you don't know how to play, stay out the game. These weak ninjas be causin' real ninjas like me to lose.

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: For the most part, that's what the police are there for, except for when they do what's not in their job description. We believe "you lose" because those are some of the consequences to the "game" you're playing. Surely you knew the other side of the "game" before you got in to it? Did you not know about the possibilities of jail and death? Does this make any difference in how you think? We'd hope so!

My Life

It's the prince, Lil' Solid. Well Beat, I thought that 2-6-07 was my last entry in The Beat from the inside but I'm still sittin' in this mutha and I'm getting stressed the hell out and I really can't stand or take the bullshhh too much longer. But I guess that's the type of life a person from Oakland got to go through. Even though bein' in here is kinda of keeping me safe.

I could be my older brotha and be sittin' in a casket but I'm not, I'm alive and I love it. I'm in the middle of a war I'm not hidin' or nothing. I just think about my brotha, my daughter, and my uncle and go after the money. Even though it's not right, it keeps my pocket tight and you know that I got my wife in my life. So hella stuff is lookin' nice, but I miss my daughter hella much. When I go home this time I gon' make sure that I'm occupied so as not to come back.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: It's sounds like you have a lot of things going for you Lil' Solid. But it sounds like you also have a lot to lose, and have already lost a lot, like your brother. Is your life so different from your brother's, that you feel the same thing can't happen to you? If it did, what would happen to your wife and daughter? How would your uncle feel? We know it's hard to imagine making money any other way than the way you do, but we also know it's possible. You have to start low and make your way up. But you'll have accomplished something and done right by your family in the process.

Unfinish Puzzle

My life is like a puzzle, I try to do right but stay on my hustle
try not to get caught with the bundle
while I'm not humble, try not to do wrong but yet it's hard
everybody say I'm a fraud tryin' not to hit a broad.

-Lil' Dizzil

From The Beat: It seems that you have some conflicted thoughts and emotions and, like so many others in your position, struggle with the reality of needing to do what needs to be done to survive and doing what you know is right. We hope that one day you and the other readers out there like you realize that there are other options. Hustling and selling are the easy ways out, but they don't stay easy for long and can lead to dark and troubled places (jail is just one).

Not A Good Puzzle

If my life were a Puzzle, it is not a good puzzle at all and it is not fun to play with this life puzzle. But the puzzle do have its ups and downs and good times. But all of it can be not be fun like in the hood and the car.

-Jp

From The Beat: Do you think there might be missing piece to the puzzle in your life? A piece that might help the rest of your life fit together better? What would that be? A girl? A better relationship with a family member? More money? A chance to go away for a while? Is there a magic missing piece?

Soundtrack Of The Life

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We're not able to publish what you've written because it sounded like you chopped and screwed a lot of different artists. We can not and will not endorse plagiarism. However, if you choose to share something from a certain artist, writer, etc and give them their acknowledgement and/or credit, then that we will print. You must acknowledge that the work you're sharing is from whomever, or else it will sound like you're trying to take credit for it. We're sure you are talented enough to make your own flow/rap. Can you do that and share that with us? Now that we would have no problem publishing, as long as it's Beat appropriate. Thank you.

Music of My Life

If life was to have a soundtrack for me it would be my brother June that has died. One of his songs, "All my Life," it is my favorite song. If I was sneaking, it would be the Pink Panther song, if I was running fast, it would be "fast like a NASCAR." If I was scared it would be the scary movie music, etc...

-Eric

From The Beat: It's crazy how our moods all have their own tunes to go with them. Here you cover all the bases: Love and loss, racing, fear – and even (sigh...) doing dirt. We bet you have more songs and moods to you as well. What are they?

Juvenile Hall

Behind these walls is like taking away your freedom. You can't shower, eat,
sleep, can't use the bathroom, gotta wear other people clothes and shoes
that make me feel slavery. And you can't do things you want at the time.

-Erin

From The Beat: Juvie definitely wasn't designed to be a fun or inviting place. We wish that all of those discomforts would keep you all from coming back, but it doesn't seem to work that way. Why do you think that is? What's your plan for staying out?

When I'm In Here!

When I'm here, my life is changed.
A lot of sorrow and a lot of pain.
I wanna do better for the best, and forget about the rest.
So when I get out I'll be changed, even if it's starts to rain.
All my family and my girl so I can give them the whole world.
To the west to the east, I say rest in peace to all my patnas who are gone,
I'll see you soon when I'm gone.
To my girl Lana, I love you baby until the end.
When I get out I'm gonna see you, love is strong until one day when I'm gone.

-Alex

From The Beat: We'll al be gone one day, but we hate to hear youngsters talking about the end like it's around the corner. If you want to change your life, it's difficult, but it is possible. You even have a girl to support you. You should be thinking about the possibilities for your future, not the end of your life.

I'm Missin'...

I'm missin' my family,
I'm missin' my block,
I'm missin' school
I'm missin' my Bz.
I'm missin' my lil bra, Kmani
Im missin' out on hella shhh.
I'm missin' life up in here.
Last but not least I'm missin' my bra
Man, Young Cell I miss you bra we keeping it solid
Rest In Peace

-Kerry

From The Beat: That's the thing about jail, isn't it? You don't have anyone except the other kids that are locked up with you. You don't get to eat what you want, don't get to sleep when you want, don't get to talk to who you want. And if you keep getting locked up, it'll just get worse. Remember how much you miss all those things you listed the next time you're about to make a decision that will end you up back in here.

Who I'm Mad At?

The person I'm mad at is my dad. The reason I am mad at my dad is because he did not come to my court dates and he don't have a house phone yet. I say that 'cause if he did I would of been out of here! But my time will come, so I will not be worried about nothing.

The reason I'm really mad at him is 'cause he ain't doin' what he supposed to be doin' for my lil brothers and lil sister. He got a job, but that don't mean nothin' to me 'cause when he get his check he don't do nothing for the family. So I don't really give a damn, but I really love him and respect him. It's just the things he do that made me mad.

-Mad at dad

From The Beat: You have a right to be mad! What he's doing is totally messed up. He's earning money and he's not taking care of his kids? People can get in trouble with the law for that. It's illegal not to take care of your kids! (Even though it doesn't seem like it.) We understand that he's your dad and you love him, but you may find yourself losing respect for him and his selfish ways. You should feel free to call him out on it too – unless he is violent, in which case, don't do that.

My Time

What up Beat? This Chino from Hayward. Well I go to court this Friday, I don't know if the judge is goin' let me go home or send me back to camp. All I can do is hope and pray for the best. Well wherever they send me to, I just hope that God will be there to lead and guide me through the program. Well that's it for now Beat, I'm gonna cut this one short.

-Young Chino

From The Beat: You can pray to God, that will help. But sometimes you have to look inside yourself for the answers, you have to be your own guide, you can't wait around for a divine force to lead you by the hand and blame the rest on a life that's out of your hands.

No Title

My happy thought is that I'm going to be out this week. Another happy thing is that I'm goin' to be a dad in October. When my baby mama told me that she was pregnant, I didn't believe her. My mom told me that I better take care of her while she's pregnant, but now I'm here. When I get out that's what on my mind.

-Brandon

From The Beat: That is exactly what should be on your mind. A lot of you youngsters get excited at the thought of having a baby, but you don't seem to understand that your life is about to change forever (or it should anyway). Being an adult parent is hard enough, but for a teen to be a parent is a whole greater challenge. We hope you will do the right thing, straighten up, think about how to take care of your family best in the long run (not just in the immediate). Good luck. You'll need it.

A Few Things Under My Belt

I'm proud that I've accomplishment a few things, got a few things under my belt. I got a football scholarship. I'm looking at a football scholarship to Orgeon. My biggest accomplishment I have never accomplished that I need to is getting out the system and getting off probation fast bra!!!

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Congratulations! That is incredible, a once in a lifetime opportunity. You're very lucky and must be very talented. All we can say, is don't forget your studies. You can't play football your whole life, but the knowledge you'll get at college will last you forever. Don't blow the academics!

I Grew Up Without My Dad

i think that if i had a father in my life
i think i would have been in school
and i would not have been on the block
i think that i would have been playing sports
and i think that i would have had good grades

-Moe

From The Beat: "Money Over Everything"? Or you're from the Fillmore? Or, or, you are a Moe? Whatever, it's time for you to start to father yourself. You're old enough to give yourself the advice a loving father would give, and you're young enough to change the life that you live. So don't look back with regret and quit, look ahead with hope not dope — and go legit.

My Dad

It makes me smile every time I hear my daddy's voice when he screams my name. Sometimes I feel lucky to have a dad like mine.

-Jackie

From The Beat: That is lucky! We hope you do what he tells you and respect him by not getting locked up!

Accomplishment

I am happy that I got signed to a major label with the group I am in. We are moving to New York when I get out, and we are going to pursue a career with a legitimate way of making money and rapping. I am doing something I love and at the same time I'm making money and traveling the world and meeting new women. What else can you want? I hope to soon take care of my family and help others if I'm wealthy enough.

-Jay

From The Beat: It's not everyday that you get signed to a major label. If that is for real, big congratulations! Remember, when you do travel, that the culture is different everywhere. Be wise and observe your surroundings before you act. Make sure you're smart about what you say and do and how you spend your money. There are plenty of one-hit wonders that make money and then disappear back into their old lives when they blow it. It's the smart ones that diversify their interests, learn how to interact with different kinds of people and learn from their experiences, that are the true successes. This is your shot, don't blow it.

Happy Thoughts

The reason I'm happy because I got a straight release and I'm going to the house fast like a Nascar; alright y'all, keep yo head up .

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: We hope your going to the house to stay safe and keep yourself out of trouble—we don't want to see right back in unit one.

Happy Thoughts

A special person makes me smile and makes me feel happy every time I see her face. When she smiles at me, I can't help but smile back at her. Even when I am mad and I try to stay angry all day, she still puts a smile on my face. She is the type of person that don't make me mad and I can talk to her about anything.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: It's so important to have people like that in your life. Not everyone does, so you should feel lucky!

Happy Thoughts

Love is something that makes me smile. Every time I feel love it makes me feel all bubbly and warm inside. My boyfriend, my love, is a person that's makes me feel hella happy, more than any other person in this world. It was such a good experience when I met my man Ray. I wrote his name in my heart and there it will stay. When our eyes met it was like love at first sight. It was an experience I only shared with him, and every time I think of him, it makes me happy!

- L

From The Beat: First love is a wonderful thing. Though it's called first for a reason, and it can be very painful when it ends. We hope yours will last for a while! Ms. L, we cut the rest of your name 'cause we do our best to not include last names.

Life Is What You Make of It

A puzzle yet a game.
To maneuver though my section I'm a have to maintain.
Never struggle to live a lesson watch me step a different way.
I'm a beat a ninja ass and have him laying where he stay.

-Kal

From The Beat: You've got some bigger lessons to learn if you still think that beating someone down is a good solution to whatever problem. Violence has never solved a thing.

It was such a good experience when I met my man Ray.
I wrote his name in my heart and there it will stay.

Mad At Myself

At this point of time in my life I am most disappointed and mad at myself. I'm not putting myself down, I think knowing my faults just helps me become a better person. The reason I am mostly mad at my self is because the first time I got released from juvie, I promised myself I would not come back. Unfortunately, I am back and this is my second time here. I am upset with the decisions I've been making. Even while I am in the act, my mind tells me what I'm doing is wrong, but I let the thought slip out of my mind and do whatever I do anyways. Then I have to deal with the outcome of my actions no matter what the consequences are. That is the reason why I'm mad at myself.

-Jalisa

From The Beat: Well, those are very good reasons to be mad at yourself. The good news is that you recognize it! That's half the battle. Now you have to start asking yourself why you question yourself and then go ahead and make bad decisions anyway. Are you trying to sabotage yourself? Are you trying to get noticed by your parents? Are you trying to prove something to your friends if you have to prove yourself, they're not your friends anyway)?

Friends

Friends will come and friends will go
the seasons change and it will show.
I will age and so will y'all
but our friendship will stay strong and true.

-Girly

From The Beat: We already responded to a similar piece of yours about friends. But in this one you seem to be pointing out what we said earlier, that friends come and go, but you can keep a place for them in your heart.

What's Good!?

What it do Beat? This girly just was let ya'll know what's good.

A missing puzzle piece in my life is my mom, my freedom, me goin' to go do time. I ask my self why did I have to take that ride. I miss being with my grandma, getting money, goin' to school, doing what I have to do. I'd like to get on track and get my self together.

-Girly

From The Beat: The thing about it is, not everyone was dealt a fair hand. Some people are born rich, some are born with parents that stick around and support them, others are born in a house in the country where there are no guns around... You see what we're getting at? Life is unfair. Little girls should have their mothers. Little girls shouldn't have to be worried about getting shot. Little girls deserve more no matter who they are. Unfortunately, you have to work with the hand you have been dealt and make the best out of it. Use your mind, use your desires to get out of the bad place your in. You're facing some time and you're going to have to deal with that. But we think if you put your mind to it, you'll be able to do a lot. Use the time you'll have at CYA to read as much as possible, get as educated as possible, because that's the most powerful weapon you can ever own.

Happy Thinking

There are a lot of things that make me smile and make me happy, like getting a new pair of shoes, getting an "A" on my test, hearing my dad say he loves me. But there is one thing that I don't think will make me happy - when I seen all my family at my court date even my step-mom. Although I did get myself into trouble they were there they were my backbone. And I am very glad because not everybody has a family that cares and loves them as mine loves me.

-Mercedes

From The Beat: Why wouldn't you be happy to see them at your court date supporting you? Is it because you're ashamed for having gotten locked up?

It Makes Me Smile...

When I think of the times I used to spend with
my first love
it makes me smile!
When I realized that I got hecka life to live
it makes me smile!
When I think of this guy and all the people out
in Redding.
It makes me smile!
When I think of my best friend Laura
it makes me smile!
When I think of my family and friends waiting
for me
it makes me smile!
When I think about staying clean
it makes me smile!
Live, Love, Laugh smile!
Roe ya Beat
dope, dope , dope , dope , dope acid, maryjane
heroin, heroin, heroin esctacy cocaine!

-Roe Ya Boat

From The Beat: We're smiling that you have so much to smile about! We hope that you will continue to have such an optimistic outlook for the rest of your life, minus the dope!

Friends Forever

Friends last forever, they extremely do! We fight sometimes, yeah that's true. But we will always love each other through thick and thin we are friends that last to the end!

-Girly

From The Beat: In some way, we last as friends to the end. But in day to day life, you have to be prepared for some friends to come and others to go. There may always be a place in your heart for them, but the relationship may no longer be sustainable. We're not saying this to be a drag, but unfortunately life is not always as nice as we'd like it to be.

Miss You

I hold my head up
Don't point it to the ground.
I know J
Still miss you.
I still love you, you know.
I roll a blunt and I smoke it in your name.

-Sahmoney

From The Beat: It would be impossible to not want to see justice done when a loved one is killed for no reason, although we cut the last few lines. But there is a reason why people aren't supposed to take the law into their own hands. Have you ever considered telling the police if you learn who killed your friend? Have you ever considered telling the DA? We know the system is your traditional enemy, but in this case they might be your friend. The problem with seeking revenge, is it doesn't make your loss any easier, and you may get caught and face a lifetime in prison. Is that really what you want?

Friends

I believe in angels, the kind that heaven sends. I am surrounded by angels, but I call them friends.

-Girly

From The Beat: What a wonderful way to look at the people around you who you love and who love you. Some people believe that we are all connected to one another and also to something larger than ourselves. That larger could be called heaven or the universe or many other names. But certainly it's possible that we all come from that "place" and therefore whoever is a positive influence in your life could be considered an angel!

Love

When someone say they love you
have that person prove they love you
because love is a strong word and love can hurt
you
in many ways because you never know.
For example I had a lot of money and I have a girl
we both say we love each other and I mean it and
she don't.
I would be hurt in many ways because I thought I
had love and it's not there anymore.

-Charles

From The Beat: You're right, love is a very strong word, and maybe some people use it without taking it seriously. As hard as it is to accept, you're probably better off without someone like that in your life. Anyone who's only interested in you for your money isn't worth the time.

The Heart Of Marriage Is Memories

"The heart of marriage is memories and if the two of you happen to have the same ones and can savor your reruns then your marriage is a gift of the gods." [Bill Cosby]

-Yu-ioh

From The Beat: We added the quote marks and the author's name. Don't just use someone else's words, tell us who said it and what it means to you!

I Wrote Your Name

I wrote your name in the sky and the wind blew it away.
I wrote your name in my heart that's where it will stay.
I pray for us to become as one because everything went away.
But in my mind, that's where it will stay.

-Girly

From The Beat: When life is really hard, we respond by trying to find safe places wherever they are. Maybe it's in the company of others, maybe it's in your heart and believing in yourself. You're going to have to be strong these next couple years, and we think you have it in you. But you really have to remember to keep your head on straight and keep things in perspective. Your life is about to change dramatically, but once that chapter ends, you'll have to begin a new one. Make sure you know what your objectives are for that, and stick to them. We think you have a lot of potential and we are rooting for you.

Accomplishment

Before I came back to juvenile hall this time, I had gone back to my high school, Mt.Eden. It was around time for the high school exams. I took my math high school exams and I feel like I did a good job on it. To me that's a great accomplishment.

-L

From The Beat: Doing well in school is a great accomplishment. At your age, it is arguably the most important accomplishment. Remember, no last names!

A missing puzzle piece in my life is my mom, my freedom, me goin' to go do time. I ask my self why did I have to take that ride.

Who Am I Mad At?

I'm mad at myself! There ain't nobody else to blame buy myself. I made the decisions that changed my life. I wish I can go back in time and change some decisions I've made in the past, but I can't so I have to just move on forward with my life and just learn from my mistakes.

-Smokey U6

From The Beat: You are so right, Smokey. The past is gone and nothing can change it. Only the future remains for you to chart a new course. Since you know the consequences of the choices you've made, you also know what choices to avoid making in the future. Whether you do or not is up to you.

Speak Out!

A Chance to speak, but you can't? I had a chance to speak but didn't' and put myself in a bad position. I learned from that to speak up for myself because my PO was trying to wash me and I could not speak up.

-Mark D U6

From The Beat: Well, we wish you had explained a few things in this piece. For example, how did you put yourself in a bad position by not speaking up? And how do you imagine that things would have turned out if you had spoken up? You could make this much more interesting by adding a few of those details.

Not Cool Here

What up with The Beta Within? This your boy, d-boy. I am in the cell and it was not cool in here lookin' at these four walls. And the food is shhh, and you wear people clothes and got to take a dump and the smell will still be in your room. It is not cool.

I got court on the 15th, and I hope I go back to my homies. Let's get it bra. I am out of here, bra.

-D-Boy U7

From The Beat: You may hate it here, but when all you can think about is going back to the block to be with your homies, you're more or less setting yourself up for a return visit. One day, maybe, you'll hate it so much that you'll choose not to come back.

Theme Song

If my life was a soundtrack, my theme song would be "Blunt fulla 'Dro" by Gucci Mane. The reason I would choose that song would be because everything that he focuses on in the song, is how I used to picture my life. It is also how I wanted to live my life. The other hit would by Icyy. That song is just a hit to me.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: We wish you told us what in the lyrics is how you pictured your life. What in the lyrics is how you wanted to live your life? Were there other lyrics that apply to you that you wish didn't apply? We don't just want to know the name of the song, we want to know what the song actually says that reminds you of you.

Valentine

Today I am gonna write about Valentines Day as a topic. It's asking "Is love a matter of words or a matter of deeds?" This is a good question because I never thought about love that way.

Anyways, what I think love is is that it means words depending on the type of person you are saying it to. Why? Because there are a lot of types of people. One kind is the one who will rather hear, "I love you" than receiving gifts and deeds for love. I think words are actually more powerful than gifts. To me, people that just like gifts more is just like a gold digger.

-Mr. Lonely U7

From The Beat: We know some of those people who want to use "love" to get things. But there are other kinds of deeds besides giving gifts that can show your love. For example, if you decided to stop doing whatever it is that allows the system to take from your family, that would be a major demonstration of your love for them.

Thinking Of Home

I can't stand to be locked up because you start to think that what you could be doing when you at home. And if you got a baby, you would want to be with him.

-Aj U7

From The Beat: Do you have a baby, AJ? If so, are you thinking how you have to change in order to be there for him as he grows up and needs the guidance of a father? Are you mature enough to think of your son, or are you still thinking only of yourself?

Accomplishment

I'm happy I accomplished the 8th grade, I'm happy 'cause I don't have to be in school no more. I didn't like middle school because I didn't like the teachers.

-Alicia U5

From The Beat: Even if you don't like the teachers, if you stop going to school now Alicia, you will be cheating yourself, and you will only realize it when you're older. Sometimes we just have to force ourselves to do things we'd rather not be doing now, so that down the line we can do other things instead of being forced to do things we'd rather not be doing later.

Taking Responsibility

Accomplishment, I accomplish myself for taking responsibility for my actions... sometimes, because usually I don't take responsibility. But I finally stepped up and started doing grown man shhh, like taking responsibility for running from tha group home and knowing tha cons for it in what would happen.

-Cori U3

From The Beat: If you've really stepped up to take responsibility, then that is a great accomplishment. Now, how can you use that new maturity to keep yourself out of here?

Mad At The World

I am mad at the world because my life style my friends keep leaving me in harm's way by myself. It's not the same no more my homies. I feeling lonely this ain't right or fair. The way I feel I can't even say in words!

-Dm U3

From The Beat: We think you said a lot in these few words. Maybe "it's" the same but you're not. You want something better for yourself than this, and we applaud you for that. No, examine what you want in life and make a plan to achieve it — a plan that doesn't include coming back to places like this!

Who I'm Mad At

The biggest grudge that I hold against that person is myself. I'm mad at myself because I want to do right, but the people I hang out with are bring me down. Not only that, but I'm choosing what I think is right.

-Kris U3

From The Beat: If you're choosing what you think is right, then you won't have to worry about others bringing you down. You'll bring yourself up. That's what it means to be mature — to take responsibility for your own actions, and to be able to stand up to anyone, including friends and loved ones, to say "No" when that is the appropriate response.

Another Missed Valentines

I missed two Valentines for being locked up. I was going to buy the girls flowers, candy, balloons, cards, you feel me, 'cause I'm Fat thug and I love girls, feel me. For all the females out there, Happy Valentines Day.

-Fat T U7

From The Beat: If you love the girls so much, why is it that you can't find a way to stay out there with them? Why are you spending so much time locked up with a bunch of boys? If having your fun on the outs keeps leading you back here, then maybe you're getting used to it. Time to rethink your priorities.

Hello

Jeez laweez, I'm back in des beez.

Hold on and freeze as I treat you wit dis teez.

Nah, I ratha not.

A wus up Beat? It's butter in deez cellys and such. Man, God put me here 'cause I was acting disobedient. O' well, serves me right. I'm better off getting corrected in dis way. This way I know there is no room for disobedience.

-Abbasinian Butter U6

From The Beat: Okay, Abbasinian Butter, we respected your wish to have none of your spelling corrected, but we can't keep respecting that wish because we know that some of your misspelled words are not by choice, but by not knowing the actual spelling. (For example, this is the correct spelling of your Beat name: Abysynian.) So, in future, you'll either have to accept our edits, or choose not to write. As for your message that as long as you're locked up you can't disobey, wouldn't you rather be policing yourself than handing over your freedom to strangers to keep you from being disobedient?

Happy Thinking

A happy thought I had is when I am thinking about my girlfriend. I think about how much fn we had together, and I think what I'm going to do with her when I get out. I think about our future today, and just looking at her picture makes me smile. We both run fast as hell, and we both like fighting and we slap box for fun.

-Jb Money U5

From The Beat: Your girlfriend likes you to slap box with her? We think that's the kind of game that can easily get out of hand and lead to one of you (probably you) doing something you'll later regret. But if it makes you both happy...

My Valentine

My valentine is very sexy and also sweet
Hopefully when I'm done this will be in The Beat
She is very kind and she loves me very much
I love when she touch my face with that special touch
She is my all and she is my everything
I bought her a chain that says her name
She bought me an outfit. That's how much she cares about me
I'm trying to get out of jail, but my PO trying to stop me
I'm going to end it here because it is about that time
You already know that I love you and you will be my valentine.

-Sj U6

From The Beat: This is a very sweet, and we're sure that she will love reading it. But we wonder what you loved more, her or whatever it was you did that allowed the system to take you from her? Chocolate and flowers and loving words are great, but what she wants from you is you. Can you give her you?

Happy Thoughts

I'm happy when my mom comes and sees me. When I'm getting money I'm happy. When I'm with my family, I'm just happy to be there.

-Baby Harlem U2

From The Beat: If you're happy when "you're with your family," then you must obviously be sad to be away from family. Since you know what makes you happy, hopefully you can stick to doing those things. Everything you mentioned sounds productive and harmless, except for maybe the "getting money" part. And that's only if you're attempting to get it the illegal way.

Happy Thoughts

One of the things that makes me smile is feeling a fine woman walk by, especially when she switch dem hips when she walk. Most of my memories are of me with other girls smiling. I always went to McDonalds when I was a lil' dawg. Now I eat at Denny's 'cause I'ma big dawg. Every time I think 'bout something, it's a girl and dat make me smile

-Dizzy U2

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with thinking about girls — unless that's the only thing you're thinking about. Do you have any fond memories of school? Of family? Of childhood adventures? Are you thinking about the changes you need to make so that you don't remain a "big dawg" in the big "dawg"house?

I['m Mad At Me

I am mad at myself because of what I did. I realize that me coming here. Even though this is my first time, I still miss out on school, the food I want, and the most of them, all family and friends. I wish I had these right now, but since I can't have these right now, I'm thinking of a way for me not to do it again and for me to tell sister and my family members it's not fun being here. But please believe that I wont be back

-Lil' Jar U2

From The Beat: Do you believe you won't be back? What are you going to change to keep that promise? When you say you are thinking of a way not to do it again, what are you thinking about? Just don't do it again. How much thinking does that require?

Mad At Myself

I am mad at myself because I put myself in jail. I told myself that no matter what, I was not coming back here, but look at me now. But I am going to get out, go to work and do me ok.

-Michael U2

From The Beat: You've had the time to think about what brought you back. How do you avoid making that same mistake? What held you back from achieving what you said you'd do? Your goals are all good things. But don't forget about doing what your PO says. That's a big part of staying out and "not coming back."

Happy Thoughts

What makes me happy is when I have good food to eat and when I can just chill in my room without anybody bothering me, and when I see ma little sister because she is so cute!

-Crystal U5

From The Beat: That cute little sister needs her big sister at home, guiding her through growing up. Are you going to give her what she needs?

Things That Make Me Happy

What makes me happy is getting money when you really need it and especially if you are broke. Another thing that makes me smile is when I beat something up and then get cashed out by her. Also seeing a girl with a big booty walk past and she's a dime piece.

-Tazz U2

From The Beat: "Getting money" is something we all do. Some do it in an honest way and some do it in a dishonest way. We're sure you know which way leads to the halls. Good looking females make a lot of men happy as well. But does anything she has on the inside matter to you?

I'm Mad

I'm mad at myself. I need to pick my friends better, someone who won't trade, someone who will be on my side be down to ride.

Forget the time! People say time is money, but when a ninja locked up[behind walls, there's no money. It ain't funny. But money ain't everything. It comes and goes. Most of us was acting like beasts just to eat and get that money.

-Quez U2

From The Beat: You know Quez, even if you had the best friends in the world, if you're down to ride, you're going to do time. And time is really all we have in the world because when it runs out, there's nothing left!

Who I Am Mad At

I am mad at myself for locking myself up. I can't blame anyone else for my mistakes. The mistakes that I made is my mistakes, not my parents, not my siblings, not my entire family, and not especially my friends and girlfriend, but myself.

There is no one anyone should be mad at, but yourself for your mistakes. So I am mad at myself for bringing myself back into the system, bringing myself to doing my probation all over again, and most of all bringing me, myself to be away from home for over six months. I am mad at myself, no one else.

-Lil' Jacky U3

From The Beat: Okay, Jacky, we get it. You don't hold anyone but yourself responsible for where you are. But we want more than just owning your own responsibility; we want to hear what it will take for you to make the choices you need to make — or, to put it another way, to avoid those choices you know you need to avoid.

Happy Thoughts

The stuff that makes me smile is when I see a beautiful lady. It makes me smile because I know what I'm going to do to her later. I be happy also when I have a lot of money at one time. I am happy because I know I am goin' be feeling good on the outside and on the inside I would also be able to buy all the things I wanted to do there

-Deezy U2

From The Beat: Have you figured out a way to hold onto the happiness that freedom will bring you?

Back In This Hole

Man, what 's'up with The Beat? This Lil' Junk. Most of y'all heard of me. But yeah, man, I'm back in this hole for a gun charge, Man, you know how that goes. A young ninja in the 'jects making that money until the weak-ass narcs jumped out on me. And you know how that goes. A ninja had to take 'em on one. But they caught me with a gun.

Yeah I will be back in about seven months . So yeah, you know how that goes. Lil' Junk go be back.

-Lil' Junk U3

From The Beat: So let's get this straight. You got busted (again) and sent back into a cage, but the ones who busted you are "weak-ass?" You're the one that 's locked up, so what does that make you? What you think you had to do (from the gun to the run) is the thinking of a child, and you are living the consequences of that thinking. We hope those seven months away from the street put about seven years of maturity into you. Otherwise, you're prescribing a life of lock-ups for yourself. Yeah, we know how "that goes," but we're not sure you do.

Who You Mad At?

As for me, I'm mad at my PO because he played me, trying to send me back to LA knowin' I just did a year down at the grouper. Ey, but it's gutta, they can't keep a real BG locked up forever.

-D-Boy U2

From The Beat: Who really "played" who? Your "PO" can only "send" you if you give them a reason. A year is a lot of time and hopefully you can start valuing your time and life more. Be careful of saying what "they can't do" 'cause certain crimes will have you "locked up forever." But even if that doesn't happen, think about all the time you'll be missing out on from going in and out of the system!

Still Locked Up

What's up Beat? This Lil' Junk still locked up in this cage, still trying to beat this punk case. But ya know ya boy 'bout to get out and go to the grouper and be back on the block. But man, this time I learned how to do better shhh. Man, and when I say I'm going to be slicker I mean think better

-Lil' Junk U3

From The Beat: All we can do is hope that you grow up in time to see that the huge California prisons system is filled with young men who all thought they could think better and be slicker and keep doing what they were doing. Now that they are adults and can see things like adults, they regret it, but their regret has come too late to change their fate. Only a fool or a child would believe he could go back to the block without facing the consequences of that choice, and we don't think you're a fool. So, we hope maturity reaches you before you share their fate.

Back In Here

Wa's up with The Beat? It's ya boy P. Rush back in this joint going back to a group home. But its nothing, dough. I'm going to pimp this shhh so I can get out this bullshhh-ass system, so I can get out and do what I do. All you clown-ass ninjas, I'm going to be back in a min.

-P. Rush U3

From The Beat: We took about half of this out as inappropriate for The Beat. But the part we left in tells us that you are preparing yourself for more experiences as a slave of the system. We know you can't see this, but we've been around a lot longer than you and have heard these same silly promises to return to the same things you were doing before while blaming "the system" for everything and holding yourself responsible for nothing. Most of those who write like you do here begin with the same title, "I'm Back." What more do you need to know? There is no doubt that you will grow to see why this is a self-defeating strategy, but the question is, will you learn that while you still have a chance to avoid that future, or will you only learn from behind locked doors.

Happy Thoughts

A person who makes me smile. makes me feel happy, is my girl. Every time I think about her, I feel happy and sad. The happy feeling I get is that I love her. She makes me happy and we never argue or fight.

But what makes me sad is when I think of her and I notice that I can't see her, talk to her when I want. I can't even kiss or hug her and touch her. That makes me sad just thinking about it, so give all the credit to my girl because she makes me happy when I am sad or mad. So that's a reason I love her so much.

-Lil' Jacky U3

From The Beat: What makes you so unhappy is being locked up, and that should make everyone unhappy. So, get yourself out of here and find a way to stay out of here, and things should look brighter for you and your girl.

Happy Thoughts

What makes me smile is a smile in my family face. When I speak on family I'm speaking on my sister, mother, dad, brother and uncle. It would make me smile if I seen my mother and my sister. The reason I say it would make me smile if I seen my mother and sister is because I haven't seen them both in long time. And that's my happy thoughts.

-Lil' Spooky U3

From The Beat: Your happy thoughts will turn to a happy reality, because you will be back with them. But then it will be up to you, again, to see whether you can hold onto freedom so that you don't have to conjure thoughts about the family that makes you smile, you can actually look at their smiles and know you're in the right place.

Chuck

Chea Beat, I'm back. I don't know why, but I'm back. I was out this beezy for about five or six of long months. Out of them few months, it was hard because I had to run from the police every day. When you go on da run, you don't have that much fun. Such as can't go on front street.

I came back for some mess that I got in to with my squad. I was on my way up the block when I seen the police. They was on they way down the hill...

-Chuck U5

From The Beat: The two words we hate the most in the Beat are: "I'm back." And if you don't know why, then who does? We don't think you're being honest when you say you don't know why you're here. Will you ever choose not to do the things that cause you to run from the cops every day? If not, you'll be letting them choose for you.

Valentine Day

Valentine day is really nothing for me. It's just like another other day. But my girlfriend think it's a special day. I know I am going to be in here doing the same thing, and nothing special.

-Kwes U6

From The Beat: Sorry you have to be locked up, Kwes, and even though we know this day is nothing special to you, we also know how special it is to be with your girlfriend on a day that she thinks is special. And... another reason to stay out of here!

Makin' Me Happy

The one thing that always puts a smile on my face is when I get mail from my girl. I be waiting for mail to come and if I don't get a letter, I be feeling lightweight upset. But when I get that letter it puts a big smile on my face. I love the way the letter smells. She always puts lil' perfume on it. Damn, it smells good.

Also, I don't get to say everything I want and writing a letter I get to say anything and she could tell me everything she want. But just readin' her letters make me want to get out and be back with her. Also she motivates me to finish my program for I could be back with her free without having to watch my back for the police, for I could really just finally enjoy my time with her.

-Dumb Bird U6

From The Beat: If she can truly motivate you to stop doing the things that lets the system take you away from her, then she's a real keeper! Of course you want out of here and back with her, but the real test comes after you achieve that, because then you will again be free to make your own choices. In the past, you have made choices that lead to the loss of your freedom. You simply can't make those same choices any more — unless you're will to accept the same consequences.

Accomplishment

The best accomplishment I want to accomplish is getting through life and getting through high school, and make the people who talked bad about me feel stupid. And the biggest is making my pride and joy proud as well

-Kris U3

From The Beat: Well, Kris, what we wanted you to write about was an accomplishment you've already achieved and feel proud of. But if you do what you say you're going to do here, then you will have plenty to be proud of.

Happy Thoughts

What's good with that good Beat? This ya boy Twon coming from them San Francisco streets. Well, I'm 'bout to put you up on game about this topic.

Well for ya boy, the things that make me happy is when I go to a party 'cause the excitement in going to the party is you get to dance with the bezzy and get they number, and you get to show off your dance moves when you battle them 'cause I'm a turf dancer and we like to eat ninjas up in the parties.

Another thing that make me happy is playing basketball because I live to dribble up and down the court 'cause I got game like Kobe and nobody else.

-Twon U3

From The Beat: Good for you, Twon. We'd like to see some of your moves on the basketball court. But our question is: what are you going to change when you get out of here so that you can play the kind of basketball you want to play and attend the kind of parties you want to attend? Change is required. Is it coming?

I'm Outta This Joint

Yeah man. This ya boy Lil' Curt once again. I went to court and beat the toast case man. So they gon let me go to 33rd shelter for a 90-day program and go the Y-Tec.

So, yeah man, I'm about to do this 90 days and knock it out. So I can hit the block and do what I do. And tell then I'm in here holding it down up in here.

-Lil' Choppa U3

From The Beat: So you beat your case and you're on your way to a program, but all you can write about is "knocking it out" and getting back to the block. Maybe you can grow up a little bit in the shelter and Y-Tec so that you figure out a trip back to the block is a guaranteed trip back to the lock! Don't learn that lesson the hard way!

Who You Mad At?

I dunno mayne, I'm mad at a lot of people. I think I'm more mad at myself than anybody else, and the reason for that is because of all the bullshhh I've put my moms and lil' bro through.

-Maya U5

From The Beat: Well, those are good reasons to be mad at yourself. How are you planning to make it up to them?

Locked Up Again

When you sittin' doin' time, all you do is think about the crime. You change a whole lot when all you got is time for the crime. But when you get out, all you do is lie. People say they gonna change, but still come back. So, when I get out, I ain't gone say I ain't gone come back.

-M-Mar U6

From The Beat: Well, it's admirable that you don't want to tell a lie by promising that you won't come back. But why not shoot a little higher, and at least set your goal not to come back. After all, if you know what got you here, then you also know what you have to sacrifice to avoid coming here. Then, it's just a matter of your choice.

Who You Mad At

I'm mad at the people that's trying to make decisions to make me stay here in juvie. And I'm also mad at myself for doing what I did to get my dumb ass here. Also, I mad at the person who put me here because that person did not have to do nothing from what I did. And I'm mad at my girl for not staying strong. Instead, she crying and not going to school because she's so down that I'm in here. I want her to succeed in life so when I come out she can tell me all about how she was or is so strong and that makes me think that she doesn't even care if some one she loves is in jail.

I'm also mad at the people who I so call my friends because they back stabbed me and took advantage just because I was in a foster home. They started getting me involved with people that liked to fight and every time I was bleeding, they would hit me so that I would start crying 'cause I was little at that time. Now that they know I'm grown, they don't want to mess around with me 'cause they know if they do, me and my bro will mess them up like they messed with my life.

-Lil' Speedy U3

From The Beat: Well, you're certainly mad at a lot of people. But we think most of your anger should be directed at yourself because if it wasn't for your own actions, most of the other things wouldn't have happened — from somebody putting you here to your girlfriend crying and not going to school. We wonder if you think you let your girlfriend down by allowing yourself to be taken from her, so that you showed her that you were not strong before she showed you that she was not strong. Things have consequences, Lil' Speedy, and you are now dealing with some of yours. What will you change when you get out of here so that your future consequences will also be changed?

Accomplishment

I accomplish my 8th grade school year because I was 'bout to fail. I didn't want to fail, so I brought my grades up and I was very proud of myself. I never thought I was going to make it but I did it.

-Crystal U5

From The Beat: We hope that is the first of many accomplishments, Crystal. Now that you finished middle school, go on and finish high school. And don't stop there.

Happy Thoughts

The biggest happy thought that I have is seeing everyone that on my back to get off. Why, because I'm going to be doing the thing I like to do, and I want that pride running through my vein knowing that I'm on top of my shhh.

-Kris U3

From The Beat: The fact that you are here tells us that you are not on top of your shhh. So, what are you going to do to switch that up? One more thing, Kris. From now on, please choose just one topic to write about, not all three. We want to know more about you from what you write, and when you give us three pieces of a couple of sentences each, we can't learn how you think or what you want. Next time, choose one subject and write as much as you can about it. Thanks.

My Life

My life was crazy growing up. I had a lot of shhh going on day after day dealing with people that don't give a shhh about me. So, as I got older and started learning shhh on my own, I just started being on my own. A lot of kids my age wasn't on the things I was into, like selling dope and hanging out on the block.

But now that I'm, I look back at all the things I did when I was under age. and be like, "Damn I was stupid for all them nights I'd be outside at night smoking weed."

-Ke'mar U6,

From The Beat: From The adult's point of view, being a child means being stupid. So, what interests us more than the "stupid" (childish) mistakes you made in the past, what is responsible for your newfound maturity? It can't just be that you turned 18 because we know a lot of people much older than that who still act like children, and we know some younger than 18 who have already taken responsibility for their actions, part of the definition of being an adult. We're so glad it has happened to you, but how did it come about?

Mad At Myself

I am mad at myself because I ended up in YGC. I'm really mad because I'm in here and my uncle's funeral is coming up. It gets me mad not knowing whether I'm going to be here or not. I'm mad at myself the most because I know I should be doing better. I'm not sure when I'm going to forgive myself

-Joseph U2

From The Beat: We're not sure what you need to forgive yourself for. But we are sure that you need to know what leads to this consequence, and therefore what you need to do (or stop doing) to avoid this consequence.

Missing Piece

My missing puzzle piece is me, because I'm still trying to figure out myself. Well, what I don't understand about myself is why I have these dreams that don't make sense to me. Why? Because the dreams people have usually depend on the last thoughts before you go to sleep. But what my point is I have no reason why I dream about stuff of thin air, when usually dreams come from your thoughts before you go to sleep.

-Anonymous U6

From The Beat: We don't think you're right about what dreams are made of. We often dream things that make absolutely no sense to us, yet we know they come out of our own minds, so somehow they must relate to our lives. There are people who spend their entire lives trying to understand the meaning of dreams, which often include symbols that we can't fully understand but which tell us something about ourselves. Maybe you should try writing down your dreams (those that you remember), and see if some kind of pattern emerges after time that gives you insight into what you're dreams are trying to tell you.

Today

Today is a good day in the hall. I know it not that best place to be at, but at least I am not getting killed and not getting in trouble. The thing I learned in here is to control your anger and to be more neat. The days and months I been in here I think its good, but I can be somewhere better. Holla.

-Clint U2

From The Beat: Oh yes, you can certainly be somewhere better. And it sounds like the next time you are somewhere better, you will know how to act so that you don't have to come back here. If you are able to control your anger in here, then you've learned that you can control it anywhere.

Who You Mad At

I mad at myself. I mad at the world. I wish I didn't have to be so mad but that's how it is. I got do what I gotta do, so I'm stop trying to get mad. Like Lil' Weezy say, I'm gone

-Super Hyphy U3

From The Beat: We wish you had written a little about why you're so mad. Were you mad at the world (and yourself) before you came in here, or is it all related to being locked up? Are you mad at the things you do that lead here, or are you mad that you got caught doing them and had to come here? There's a big difference.

Happy Thoughts

Things that make me happy and put a smile on my face is thinking about all of the things I wish to accomplish in the future. For instance, I wanna work up to getting' my own spot. I want to get a big-ass TV and DVD player with some nice speakers attached. I want a black leather couch, queen size bed, and I want to get a recording system hooked up in my crib too.

Another thing that makes me happy is thinking about how much fun me and my brother are gon' have when he gets a lil' older. I imagine takin' my brother to the club an' shhh for his first time, but at the same time being a good influence.

-Maya U5

From The Beat: It's interesting how much of your happy thoughts are tied up with things. You know, you could buy all these things for your little brother (when he's older), but he'll still not be happy if you aren't free to be there for him. Are there any other people in your life who make you happy?

An Unfinished Puzzle

My pops had an unfinished puzzle in my life. He just was not there. And I would see other kids with their dad and feel mad and want to fight. I guess it's that I just wanted somebody there to look up to, and feel that somebody care other than my ninjas on the block

-Mark d U6

From The Beat: The number of absent fathers is staggering, and suggests that something is missing in your father's upbringing that let him act so irresponsibly as to have children and then disappear. All you can do is to promise not to follow in his footsteps, so that when the time comes for you to be a father, you will understand that the most important role of all is to be there for your children.

In Love With the Nurse

I know she's probably 5 to 10 years older than me and even married, but I don't care. She makes me wanna be the best I can be. And one day hopefully marry some one like her. She is so beautiful. She reminds me of a bouquet of red roses. I would be too shy to ever tell her what I think about her, but that's why I'm writing this.

-Baby Duce U6

From The Beat: As we told you when you wrote this, we can't allow you to identify this object of your desire, and we know you understand why. You wish to marry "someone like her" is worth going after, even if going after her is off limits. Beautiful people respond to beautiful people, so be the best you can be and you will attract other people just like her.

Happy Thoughts

When I see a big booty and when she be feeling ya boy and when they be walking by an she know people looking and they just start smiling

-Ant U2

From The Beat: Well, we're glad something makes you smile. But if this is all you could come up with in an hour's workshop, you need to start filling your life with some meaningful things.

What I'd Tell Someone Who Doesn't Know

I would tell whoever is reading this paper that being locked up is not something that you would want to have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. I mean, we go to school on the inside, but that's nothing like being on the outside going to school. In here, you only have a certain amount of time for what you have to do for the day, and get your credits and get the hell on back in your room.

If you do not like to listen to your parents, you better start listening to your parents, because if you become a detainee of a juvenile system, you are going to have to listen to your counselor. That's why I recommend you do not go to jail.

-Young Murph U7

From The Beat: Before you got locked up, what did you think juvenile hall would be like? Did you think it would be some place that you would like? Of course not, but that didn't keep you from coming here. So, what would it take — besides the discomfort of being here — for you to sacrifice some of your activities on the outs in order to prevent yourself from being a return detainee?

Accomplishment

My accomplishment I have is when I was in the middle school because I thought I was not going to finish school and people (teachers) telling me that I'm not going to finish. And that put me down a lot. Plus, I had a lot of death in my family. But family is the only thing I got and I would not trade it in the world. But then I finally finished school and went to high school.

-Jb Money U5

From The Beat: Congratulations on finishing middle school. There will be even bigger congratulations when you finish high school — your next accomplishment!

Project Girl

Girl, what I see in your eyes is fire, same is mine
Mad at the world 'cause you came from a broken home
Heart of stone
Lonely time are momentary
Seems scary
Merry merry will have you high as kite
But pain and loneliness will stay at night

-Mark d U6

From The Beat: If "pain and loneliness" stay with you, then maybe you should device a new way of looking at the world and at your strategies for coping. What will help you end your pain and loneliness? If it's not getting "high as a kite" (and it's not), then what will do it?

Happy Thoughts

My happy thoughts is when I am away from some people and just kick back, not worried about nothing and just think and rap and express my feelings. That keep me happy because it positive too.

I make money too, but the right way, so people may look at me different or no different from other. But I'm not worry about that. What I'm happy about is I'm going to make money.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: When you're alone and just thinking, what do you think about? Do you plan your future in a way that avoids the mistakes of the past? How do you "make money the right way?" Does school figure into your future? We hope so, because it is the ticket to that legitimate work you want to do.

Smiling

What makes me smile is the people I love. When I see them I can't do anything but smile.

-Jungle U6

From The Beat: Well then, Jungle, it's time to find a way to stay with them and keep smiling rather than doing the things that let the system take you from them and put a frown on your face! Are you up to the task?

Gone

A whole year of my life is about to be wasted on bullshhh. I 'm going to the Rancho. I'm gonna lose so many things. But I try not to look at the bad things 'cause I'll probably just end up running. So I try to think about the good things, although I can't think of any. I guess I just have to go and knock it out.

What I know is that I can't be playing around with my life. I'm about to turn 18 in April. So that means that when I get out of the Ranch I'll be turning 19. But for now I'm gone.

-Baby Duce U6

From The Beat: We wish things were different for you, BD, but we know you can do the program at The Ranch. Plus, The Beat goes there every Friday, so you can just keep getting things off your chest on these pages.

Yo Estoy Enojado Con Alguién

Yo estoy enojado con un vato que se hacía pasar como mi amigo. Yo no lo considero así porque me quería quitar la novia que yo quiero. Desde esa vez, ya no nos hablamos y no pienso hablarle nunca jamás en mi vida.

A mí me hace feliz cada vez que pienso que mi familia está con salud. Gracias a Dios y que nunca les falte la comida.

From The Beat: Si ella te decidio a ti, y el la quiere apesar de eso, entonces no deberías considerarlo tu amigo. Deberías de buscar la manera como alejarte de esos amigos que no son confiable, y también buscar la manera como tú puedas estar afuera atendiendola. Otro puede llegar y te puede dejar llorando.

I Am Mad At Someone

I am mad at a dude who always tried to get over on my friend. I don't consider him one because he tried to take the girlfriend that I love. Ever since then, we don't talk to each other and I don't plan on ever talking to him again in my life.

I get happy every time I think that my family is in good health. Thanks to God and may they never be in need of food.

-José U3

From The Beat: If she chose you, and he still wants her despite her decision, then you shouldn't consider him your friend. You should find the way that will distance you from these friends whom are not trustworthy, and also find the way to be on the outs attending this girl. Someone else can step in and leave you crying!

Cosas Guardadas

Algunas veces tube algunas cosas que decir, pero no hubo alguién en quien confiara. Sí tube algunas cosas guardadas por mucho tiempo. Tenía algo guardado por mucho tiempo, pero alguién se lo comió y no pude hablar porque mi mama me quito la oportunidad. Cuando llego la oportunidad de hablar, fue dificil.

From The Beat: ¿Qué fue lo que te hizo que no hablaras? ¿Quien te lo impidió?

Things Held In

Sometimes, I had some things to say, but there was never anyone around in whom I could confide. I had something held in for a lot of time, but someone ate it and I couldn't speak because my mom took away that opportunity. When the opportunity came to speak, it was hard.

-Denis U7

From The Beat: What was it that happened that made it difficult for you to speak? Who impeded you?

El Día De San Valentin

Hola Beat? Soy Francisco del D.F. Me acuerdo el año pasado que estaba con mi novia en el cine. Era dia de San Valentin, no le dije nada, solo la invite a mi casa y le dije que me esperara, en lo que iba a la cosina. Luego regrese con una bolsa de bombones y un ramo de flores para recordar el día de San Valentin. El año pasado me la pase el Día de Los Muertos en San Felipe, Mexico.

From The Beat: Nos imaginamos que fue una gran sorpresa para ella. Que bien que la sorprendistes de esta manera. Si tanto quieres a esta muchacha, también deberías de buscar la manera como estar con ella en todo momento. Una pareja esta compuesta por dos personas: Recuerda eso.

St. Valentine's Day

Hello, Beat? I'm Francisco from D.F. I remember that last year, I was with my girlfriend at the movie theaters. It was St. Valentine's Day. I didn't tell her anything. I just invited her to my house and I told her to wait for me because I was going into the kitchen. Later on, I came back with a bag of bubble gum and a cluster of flowers to commemorate St. Valentine's Day. Last year, I spent the Day of the Dead in San Felipe, Mexico.

-Francisco U7

From The Beat: We can only imagine that it was a huge surprise for her! That's good that you surprised her in the manner you did! If you love this girl so much, then you should always find the way to be with her at all times. A relationship is made up of two people: Remember this.

A Mi Ser Más Querido

Pienso que a mi madre no le contaría esta experiencia que se vive aqui porque es el ser que más me quiere y quien quiero también. Por eso no le contaría esta experiencia tan dura de mi vida.

A un amigo le diría que no hago algo que pueda venir a la cárcel. Le advertería antes de que lo hiciera. Si cayera preso sin haberlo advertido, me sintiera mal.

From The Beat: Si creemos que es el ser más querido es la madre, pero también la confianza hace sentir mejor a las personas. A lo mejor si le hablas a tu madre y le se sincero, hiciera que ella confiara más en ti, pero si la vas a lastimar con tus revelación, es mejor callarselo. Sería lo mejor que trataras de prevenir que alguién viniera a este lugar. ¿Que le dijeras para convenserlo que este lugar no es un buen lugar?

To My Most Loved One

I think that I would not tell my mother about the experience that one lives in here because she is the one who loves me the most and whom I love the most, too. That's why I would not tell her about this very difficult experience in my life.

I would tell a friend that I do not do anything that would cause me to go to jail. I would warn them before they did anything. If they were to end up in jail and I didn't get the opportunity to warn him, I would feel bad.

-José Z U5

From The Beat: Yes, we do believe that the being most loved is a person's mother, but also the trust makes people feel better. Probably if you talk to your mother sincerely, it would make her have more confidence in you, but if you're going to hurt her with your revelations, it is best to keep them to yourself. It would be even better if you tried to prevent someone from coming to this place. What would you say to convince him that this place is not a good place?

Cuando Estamos Encerrado

Bueno, yo como todos, tengo la esperanza de salir muy pronto de este lugar donde una esta nomas encerrado como un perro. Estamos nomas esperando que no saquen a pasiar, pero no tienen ellos la culpa sino nosotros mismo por hacer las cosas que uno sabe que lo pueden meter preso.

Uno juega con todo pero uno ya esta encerrado nos ponemos a pensar en lo que hicimos y porque estamos preso.

Espero cambiar mi vida muy pronto. alejarme de las pandillas y dedicarme ayudar a mi jefita que de verdad necesita mi ayuda.

From The Beat: Esperamos que puedas tomar este tiempo para pensar bien en las cosas que has hecho. ¿En que te ha ayudado o te ayudará estar aqui? Deberías considerar el pensamiento de salirte de las pandillas, porque si lo haces sera algo bien productivo para todos. Cuidate mucho.

When We're Locked Up

Well I, like everyone else in here, have the hope of getting out of this place very soon, where one is just locked up like a dog. We're just waiting for them to take us out for a spin, but it is not their fault but rather our very own for doing the kind of things that one knows can get one locked up.

One plays with everything, but when we are locked up, we start to think about what we did and why we are locked up.

I hope to change my life very soon, distance myself from gangs, and dedicate myself to helping out my mother who truly needs my help.

-Jose Rangel 150-Crew

From The Beat: We hope that you can take this time to truly think about the things that you have done. How has or how will being locked up in here help you out? You should really think about the thought you had about getting out of gangs, because if you do it, it would be very something very productive for all. Take very good care of yourself.

No Pude Decirle Que Me Gustaba

Hi, mi nombre es Zaogo. Si hubo una vez que no pude decir nada a mi novia, pero después le dije a un amigo que le dijera que ella me gustaba y funsionó. Por eso, se lo agradezco mucho. Esta es mi historia.

From The Beat: Que bién que te funsionó. Fuera sido mejor si hubieras tenido las fuerzas para hacerlo tú solo. ¿No crees?

I Couldn't Tell Her What I Liked

Hi, my name is Zaogo. Yes, there was a time when I couldn't say anything to my girlfriend, but then I told a friend to tell her that I like her and it worked. That's why,I appreciate it a lot. She is my story.

-Zaogo U6

From The Beat: That's great that it all worked out! It would have been better if you would have had the guts to have done this on your own. Don't you think so?

SUNMAN'SLIGHT ***We are honored to get more of the wisdom of the OG, SunMan'sLight. After a lifetime of incarceration, beginning in juvenile hall when he was 9 and continuing through CYA and the state prison system (where he is now 64), this fine writer ("I Cried, You Didn't Listen") first examines the phony promises of homies who hardly ever follow through on their promises to those who get locked up, and then, as he contemplates the end of his life, he examines his own life of missed opportunities — the hustle for the quick buck that begins a slide down a deep hole that can easily become a bottomless pit. SunMan'sLight writes from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison.***

My Turn To Die

I remember, twelve years old, sitting in a chair that was too small for me at the "Central Los Angeles County Juvenile Hall." I had been there over a dozen times before this, and nothing had changed. In the "dorm" I was always taken to, there as thirty-one other children, ages nine through fifteen, and it was a frikking zoo. I was scared, but I was getting increasingly "toughened up." One particular "counselor/guard" was there every time I was arrested, and he'd tell me after I would take my "new arrival" beating by one of the older, much bigger, kids, "Stop sniveling! Toughen up! Don't start crying!" I don't remember exactly when, but I guess what he told me worked because I did stop everything he told me I "had to stop."

The insistent arguing, fighting, from morning to night, I remember well. It was like a smothered roaring throughout the unit, and my brain, exactly as it is here in the cellblocks. I have tried, but cannot, to forget how one of the guards would occasionally take a boy to "counsel" him, never in the office, always, "Let's talk in the back, kid." It took me a while before I figure out I was not the only one he had promised he would let "go home if you're nice to me." They were always the petite, cute kids, not the bigger, tougher ones. When it would come my turn, again, I was still "toughening up," just like they told me I had to do. "Some day, I'm going to be big and tough so he won't do that to me any more." There was no doubt in my mind of that.

"Some day I'll get out of here, and I ain't never coming back," I promised myself, and anyone else who would listen, every time I got into trouble. Mom and Dad would come to visit and sit patiently, quietly, as I pleaded and made the same promises I had all the times before.

"I'll do better. Won't do it ever again. I won't cause any more problems, just make them let me go home. Dad, mom, please, please? I promise!" It was always the truth, never a lie. I meant every word, every promise. It's just that when I did get back home, I forgot I had made them. Even more serious was I forgot the consequences I had experienced.

Mom and Dad were always in the courtroom, Mom crying, Dad hurting so much he could not look at me more than a second or two; he didn't want to cry right there, especially not in front of his son. What is this "macho" thing that insists we be so, even with our own children? No matter they were "always there," the longer the days/weeks became that I was locked up, the more convinced I became "mom and Ad just don't care." I would become oblivious that all the while they were desperately battling for me. Most I had no knowledge of.

"It will be better, judge, just let us have him back," they would please as I sat outside the judge's chamber with a big goon standing over me. It'll be different this time, we promise you, your Honor. He's really a good kid. Please, sir, this one more time?" these were all the things I did not hear, nor did I see their tears shed together at home, missing me as no other two people could, or ever would again.

"This time," the judge let them place me in the "Optimist Home for Boys," in Highland Park, California. I did not know they had agreed to pay $90.00 each month of my stay there, a hefty sum of money in those days of $1.00 an hour wages.

"I cannot continue doing this if he keeps getting into trouble. I won't! I see Dwight before me one more time, I'm not going to have any choice but to send him to Youth Authority."

After more "toughening up" at "the Home," which was nicer than a lot of the places I had been, I went directly to "Harding military Academy," in Glendora, CA. I lasted only a short time, but I toughed up quite a bit, learning "The Art of War" and how a good Marine protects his country." The girls in the neighborhood were lusting after the "dress uniform" I wore home on the weekends to attract them, and eventually I ran away with one of them in a car I stole.

We went to Arizona where we gave one another our virginity, and played house at "Willow Beach" on the Colorado River until I was arrested for "transporting a stolen car across state lines (Dire Act, Federal Penal Code). Eventually back to "Central" and CYA, for more hardening up. It would be many years later before I learned a son had been born from that whirlwind relationship.

Four years of California Youth Authority, four years of extremely intense toughening up. As it turns out for most of the kids there, even today, I was being prepared for state prison; intentionally or not, it is what the juvenile penal system does best. Though I'd experienced a little of what it would be like when I was in Deuel (DVI) at Tracy, little did I know that no matter the skirmishes I battled at CYA, none would match those I would face in San Quentin. There, at eighteen years old, I would begin my lifelong fight to keep breathing by taking up a roofing hatchet, forced to kill two brothers who wanted from me something I was unwilling to give them

Here it is now 46 years later. I am at Salinas Valley State Prison where the administrators obviously cannot administer, taking care of some personal business we all must attend to sooner or later — dying. My emotions are mixed as my journey nears its end, but I am tired and need to rest. It has been a while since it could have ended any other way. I've known I had worked myself into a corner and the only way out is inside one of those cardboard boxes "The State" splurges for each time a convict passes.

Before I do go I needed to write once again, contrary to what you may have heard or thought, there is no glory to be found here. "Honor" among the "new breed" of inmates is spelled s-c-r-e-w-y-o-u. "Old School" is no longer here. It's ton the Antique Road Show. Homie lies; time in prison is not "cool," and there is no doubt you will most certainly regret coming here.

I got to tell you, though, the homie gangsters here are real tough. Why, a short time back, I watched one of their shot callers hit and knock a seventy-one-year-old man out of his wheelchair because he would not give up his pain medication!

I must admit I regret not having been smarter than I am. I know "smart" people don't go to a juvenile hall, a county mail, a state prison, more than once. They do that one mistake, learn from it, and get busy maki8ng it right with family, working an hon4est job, finding that special person, struggle on together, help one another suffer through the hardships, get their own place, work harder, make family prouder, struggle more, suffer hardships, get a promotion, move to a larger, comfortable residence, buy a nicer car, work struggle, suffer, reach behind, grab hold of a hand, pull, work...

Those steps are "badges of honor" that one can wear with a great deal of pride, not the tattoos all up on our necks, chests and arms, put there so that when we post wearing a tank-top, showing off, our appearance might be intimidating enough to convince those walking by checking us out we are "one bad motha."

Oh, I hope you will understand one other fact I have to share with you: that "five years ain't nothing" the judge gave you? You're right, "it ain't nothing" compared to the life sentence that you have a one-out-of-three chance of piling up here along the way putting in work, and "proving" yourself to the fellas. I strongly, respectfully, suggest if you feel lucky enough to beat those odds, go to Las Vegas.

Are The Homies Taking Care Of You?

Before I get busy here on another subject, a few o the OGs, of which I am one, would like to know if you guys and ladies are experiencing similar problems as we with the home boys in the free world? A whole lot of people around here are pissed because the "homies ain't taking care of us," and we'd like to know how many of you younstas are, or are not, receiving letters from homeboys? Are they looking after you like they said with Zoo Zoos and Wham Whams?

They told a bunch of 18-year-olds here on the yard, who just arrived here out of CVYA, that "if you ever get busted we'll be taking care of you." It's not happening, and OGs are trying to tell the younstas what's up with that. Any advice you can give us? You think it's going to happen for them, for you, like it was all promised? Sure would appreciate you letting us know. Our thanks and respects.

Before The Ground

KEVIN MOORE ***We all have things we want to do before we hit the ground and that's what this next writer explains to us this week. Obviously speaking to someone he loves dearly, he takes us on a journey through what his heart is telling him to do before he hits the ground. He's writing from a Texas State Prison in Huntsville, Texas, and we know people can relate because we get poem of love found and love lost all the time. Is it possible to really love someone while incarcerated? Is it probable for people who've been deemed less than human to have such human feelings? Hell yeah, and so we shouldn't forget people who are incarcerated just because they're not in our everyday sight. We need to humanize a situation where our society spends so much time and money dehumanizing people. Here's a beautiful human poem from someone with a giant heart.***

You did not cover it, you did
not take away from it at all,
Just your apprehensions draining
and sapping your integrity.

You should have left it where it was;
instead, in need, you took the fall,
must your misconceptions keep you
spinning through out anxiety

And oh, here it comes, just as warned
putting you behind deeper walls,
crushed by emotions, twisting and
turning into reality.

Put it behind you, don't ignore
it and don't ever heed its call.
Thrust your concentrations further
from what's left of your parody.

It all comes down to this, the
final bliss before the ground.
Should have released the clicks, the
final tricks before you're found.
So now you're stuck and missed the
final kiss after my sound.

What you meant, I will never know
unless you learn to speak clearly.
Will not my first acceptance cause
the splintered breaking of it all?

Where did it go? I want to know
why your demand cracked so early.
Cannot my last reluctance show
what's in your heart and stop your fall?

Happens I collected reasons
in a place which is seen barely.
Do not curse past appearance with
any judgments making a wall.

When your time is up, crawl forward
and make insanity nearly.
Shall not pant last annoyance with
those frozen chills brought through his call.

Do you think you would like this:
Some more hits before the ground?
Will you think to come up for
some more wish before you're found?
Shall you know how you must want
some more kiss after my sound?

You should have covered it; at least
taken it away from us all
but, your many apprehensions
drained and sapped your integrity.

You could not leave it where it was
so, that is why we let you fall
and your distant misconceptions
spun you: Lost in anxiety.

Here it comes again, trying — as
warned — to put us behind your wall.
Crushed by your drifting emotions,
now a twisted reality.

Kept it with you, paid attention
and sadly listened to its call.
Lost your needed concentration;
you're a pitiful parody...

And it all comes down to this:
Some more hits the final bliss
and what would happen if you
Felt a miss before the ground?

You should've released the clicks:
Some more wish, the final trick
but, could you stand it if you
broke you heart before I'm found?

So now you're stuck and missed
some more kiss the final kiss.
We're meant to be one but, by
waiting 'till after my sound.

And it all comes down to this
before the ground.

QADAFI FIVE PERCENTER

This next writer spits some real knowledge about the knowledge we receive in school. Most of it is just regurgitation and mimicking what the professor tells us. But the only way to really learn something is to get as many sides of it as possible — to challenge ideas that are consumed with assumption that they are correct by most everyone else. He's a wise writer and we realize that what he speaks is not only true, but also of utmost importance in the advancement of our communities, and most importantly, of ourselves as individuals. For how can we offer the younger generation different ways of thinking if we just accept a teacher's lessons as being correct without challenging them. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

Man Know Thy Self

The world through my eyes is a world obsessed with sex, violence and murder. But the world I envision is one where all race live in peace and harmony. A revolutionaries dream I dream, a dream that can manifest itself into a pure reality, but if only they knew: blind, deaf and dumb some remain, yet they know!

Surely this is ignorance at its highest level, mathematical principles at it's lowest elementary level they perform, unable to graduate to the next level because of the bond of ignorance placed upon their cerebral cortex (brain thinking process). What sad pathetic students some remain under the guidance of mad professors show only intentions is to teach obedience and submission to his students through "artificial intelligence" which leaves the student dumbfounded and confused when in the real world and out of reach of the professor's realm, where sages will question every action and move they make, you see for the sages every move is a "calculated mathematical one," rigorously precise in every maneuver made in life.

For the students today learn how to mimic here mad professors while reading from the same text, a task I cannot understand since it is the student who must constantly read such doctrines, so I can only come to the conclusion that the student does only what is told of him in an attempt to gain his PHD, and then ventures into a world full of "Robotic Species" programmed to do as their mad professors designed there microchips(brain) to do, which is to conform to "illogical mathematical principles."

Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.

WILLIAM HAMBY Writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, we bring to you a superstar writer. He's been really consistent with The Beat and we totally appreciate it. When we read writings like these, we wish we could give something back besides just our publication. We wish we can make all these writers millionaires because their pieces are worth more than that — they're priceless. This week he gives us a lengthy and amazing poem to the president. It's lengthy because there are so many things wrong with this country and amazing because we find out what issues he's serious about, which tells us a lot about who this writer is. And in his closing poem, he answers the question of in what way he's least understood. He gives us examples people take for granted nowadays. Characteristics like loyalty, honor, and respect are diminishing in this day and age, where every man and woman are out for themselves. His insights are always welcomed and we love learning from him. Read on and find out if you do too...

Hello it's me, a U.S. citizen,
Please take this time to pause and listen,
First off what is it that keeps you driven,
And do you see the world and its condition?

A Letter To The President

Hello it's me, a U-S citizen,
Please take this time to pause and listen,
First off what is it that keeps you driven,
And do you see the world and its condition?
Morals are needed for your job at hand,
If you follow god then you won't need a man,
Or army, guns are not needed,
Use that money to keep children feeded,
Billions for NASA, but you still ignore Africa,
Going to Iraq for terrorists you're after,
But Bin Laden is in Afghanistan, high on heroin,
Trafficking, laughing what a disaster
You still ain't catch him,
Plus the Hurricane Katrina fiasco,
The government ain't short of no cash flow,
And soon we don't got to worry 'bout Castro,
In Ethiopia the kids can't even watch grass grow,
This world is falling as time pass slow,
Also, please realize that computers can surpass our intellect,
Don't let, something go wrong and the earth go wreck,
And let me speak on missiles,
We don't need no more look at how many the U.S. is sitting,
I feel like it's on a land mine we all living,
Stop being conceited and start giving,
Help feed the poor,
And stop sending troops to the wrong country for your war,
God is watching he won't stand anymore,
Revelations standing right at our door,
And if we keep on with injustice and three strikes giving life,
To petty criminals for stealing mountain bikes,
These are things the creator don't like,
I ask forgiveness, for us and all sinners,
Please help the poor some cant even get dinner,
See Mr. Bush you're already rich,
Blessed with power and financial gifts,
Lear jets so swift,
Still I hope you have a connection to grace,
Please believe we're all connected with fate,
Look at the way things are going today,
We need a change, a new way,
I hope you feel what the truth say,
See love is love, sorrow is not from above,
God says share peace and fortune,
Not spread war and torture, or horror, distortion,
This world is sad as abortions,
And please stop letting crooked cops get off quick,
Look at how many innocent unarmed,
Citizens police harmed this is the land of justice still I'm alarmed,
At the deficit, trillions spent still our elderly sit, laying sick, Medications they unable to get, the plot is well beyond thick,
Palestine and Israel bomb each others bricks,
They need to realize god doesn't condone this,
And this country of ours needs to address this,
And evaporate the terror that stressed us,
You were elected, to keep us all protected,
But now we all feel neglected, disenfranchised disrespected,
Lord help us, why don't you help us?
Instead of unlawful surveillance, why don't you save us,
Look at this cold dark world we facing,
Please do your job with morals or find a replacement,
Troops going to Iraq on your orders, bombers at borders,
Soldiers that won't get to see their daughters,
And you still ain't secured the nations seaports,
And cargo only focus on New York,
What about Florida, or California, please secure those harbors,
Then we can stop further slaughters,
Like the one Europe gave the Indians,
And negroes we now called African Americans,
But back then Africans was victims of massacres,
And still today we get no reparations,
Why don't you care about Haitians and Jamaicans,
Sir the Jews were given money for the losses of the Holocaust,
Also the victims of Nagasaki got money off us,
So I feel African Americans should get a check,
Forty acres and a mule and respect,
But instead look how many wind up falsely accused in jail or dead,
I plead my case, one day please read my case,
I'm in prison for assault with deadly weapon,
But the record and transcripts show no weapon,
No injury, no victims, no assault, but I sit caught,
Is it me or the judge's fault?
Justice in this judicial, I miss you,
I know its something Mr. Bush and the congress can do,
And also, quit being divided and hostile, democratic republic profiles, you all need to stand as one together, as one nation indivisible forever, we facing stormy weather,
Iraq and Russia are in hand,
Korea of the month got devious plans,
Don't send troops send FA-18's across the desert sands,
But still please respect innocent life,
And please remember this country's begging ain't nice,
Europe was terrorists to Indian life, slavery and bondage wasn't right, now on to Exxon gas, prices rising too fast,
Yet the C.E.O. got a bonus 400 million cash!
Look at the greed, another bad seed, we receive,
Those in power continue to deceive,
Already rich with tricks up the sleeve,
And sir please don't cut anymore trees,
Stop factories and oil dependency,
Or as we see, the ozone layer will continue to deplete,
Please listen as our fragile earth grieves,
Pollution never lets the air breathe,
I wrote this letter as a poem so you could see,
The wisdom I posses and seek,
God bless us all from the mighty to the weak,
This is from the heart which I speak,
God in heaven only wants good,
And anything evil is not understood,
In his eternal eyes, the most high opposes a lie,
Gives us the strength to try,
This is the land of the free so why many of us cry?
Please give us all reasons to smile. (CHANGE.)

My Principles

I'm not like you or no one. I'm true.
Don't even know you, but if you're real, I'd die for you.
I'm not like most, I'm a phantom ghost,
Raised in the east and west coast,
Never, ever snitched, even when I got "hit",
I'd lie for you, even embraced ice picks,
No one like me, I never call the law,
I'm imperial, raw, without a flaw,
Surrounded by suckers I get sore, need I say more.
I keep my honor, honor to you, me, god, and my mama,
Most don't understand this; in me is no evil, nothing underhanded, Integrity I keep next to me, honor is greater than ecstasy,
Respect me, I respect all, even the pitiful or small,
Respect those who fell and those who fall,
Honor the world because soon we won't exist, apocalypse,
So many got no sense, who else thinks like this?
No one I know not one, good as gold, bright as the sun,

WILLIAM HAMBY (CONT.)

Heart like Jesus,
Except, I don't turn cheek, and what I feel I'm gonna speak,
My spirit is bold — not an ounce of weak,
I passed away three times,
And I didn't come back to life to live a lie,
I speak truth some should give it a try,
And love is not pain, love is good to gain,
Pain is only when we can't maintain,
Unable to unleash the hell in our brain, we fell in the flames,
Who thinks like principles I cherish,
Can't understand some live a death wish,
Love yourself and others never be selfish,
Praise the greater creator without him we breathless,
Sometimes my adrenaline is venom in,
And I am misunderstood by the ignorant.

I passed away three times,
And I didn't come back to life to live a lie,
I speak truth some should give it a try

STEVEN MACIAS

We have a first time writer on the loose and from what he's already sent us we can tell he'll make this publication a little more spectacular. He sends us a letter letting us know how he got a hold of The Beat in the first place. But then he closes with a poem with a question for a title we're sure everyone's asked, "Why Me?" It's a short poem, but it encompasses many ideas of someone who's about to be released. There are feelings of elation, but also of worry and regret that we got ourselves in this situation in the first place. He's a new writer, but his skills will allow you to think of that as irrelevant since all writers who are as skilled as him have a place in The Beat Without section. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. Hopefully we'll hear from him again real soon. We're waiting...

Dear The Beat Within

I'm currently incarcerated in Pelican Bay State Prison inside of the SHU. An acquaintance of mine said you publish an interesting newsletter that focuses on a variety of subjects that relate w/ inmates.

It would be highly appreciated if I could receive this newsletter and if possible be provided w/ information on them I could contribute to it. I'm a very opinionated individual that could share many experiences that could possibly impact someone's life in a positive way. In addition I write poems that signify the many obstacles in our lives. Others I write express love, guilt and pain.

Enclosed is a poem you may have to publish or otherwise. My name may be used.

Why Me

I built a life through countless mistakes,
With surrounding circumstances that sealed my fate.
It's a devastating reality I've learned to accept,
But the way I lived what else could I expect.
I knew right from wrong yet I paid it no mind,
Now I'm trapped in a cell with the sands of time.
The consequences of my actions I've come to face,
All bottled up in a confined little space.
Years slowly drift by as I patiently wait,
Its just a matter of time till my release date.
I learn from my past each and everyday,
The lasting truth is crime doesn't pay

KENYON

Well, we're glad we got to hear from this next young writer again. However, we wish he could've taught us something about what he's doing over there at Glen Mills. We heard it was an alright program, so we're interested in the kinds of things he's learning over there. We can tell his past life is still calling him, but one has to be wise and remember that the call is probably the same call that got him locked up in the first place. Again, he's writing from Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania. Hopefully, he'll be able to keep in touch.

The Changes

My ninja I just came off my home pass yeah the Mills let ya' boy go home for 9 days. It was gravy but I was hot 'cause none of my real ones was out there. My backbone at the Ranch holdin' it down. It's good I'ma see him in a few.

It was dry in the city I didn't see nobody out there so for most of the time I stayed in my spot in Oakland blew grapes all night celebrated my B-Day wit' my lil' boo brought me a Lex and we slid out to my spot something like Bonnie and Clyde ya' heard. You already know I had on my hoodie and my bauds like a boss would and I can't wait till me and my bra reunite ya' heard.

What's Really Good With The Beat

I ain't talked to y'all in a minute you know ya' boy been at the Mills holdin' it down but I wanted to let y'all know I ain't forgot about y'all. I been up here at Glens Mills for 11 months and been down for 18 months all together and I aint seen my bra in like 20 months.

We used to do everything together from taking these lil' females to the movies to buyin' cars and pullin' all nighters and pushin' that work hard like Apes in the jungle ya' heard. My bra gets out 2 months before me but this time it aint straight to the block for us we tryna take a trip to Jamaica and I want to let him know that I got a baby on the way by that one that stay on top of the hill by our block.

But to y'all that's locked up you can find ya' self in Glen Mills but everybody can't get it right so you're gonna have to make that change on citas.

JOHNNY ***Intimate emotional deprivation is such a difficult thing to deal with — so difficult, people who've never been locked up could never understand. Imagine living in the memory of a relationship while the other half of that relationship is moving on with their lives. Sometimes they also can be sustained by memories, but most of the time, distance is too much to handle and people find comfort in someone else. This fact is devastating for those who are incarcerated because we want so bad to have those feelings of being loved being they're so hard to get in jail. This next writer speaks of love quite often and we've explained our thoughts on why. But as he explains his feelings, you can tell he's not your ordinary lover. He really feels a deep passion for the one he loves and now it bleeds through our pages. We enjoy his writing and he sends it to us from a California State Prison in Chino, CA.***

For Lovely

Pressed for hard time situations
As one, I am your gangsta no longer on the run
Feeling swayed towards my mija
And my dad, the two of you the only and most
Important thing in my life or else
My life forever sad, forever sad.

Bless you for
The pictures, bless you for the letter and bless
You my dear for beholding
Our precious son with deep comfort and care I
Know no one would have done
Better

Let realization reign and believe my soul
The fear of losing you the
Worst possible scenario of control
No more promises spoken
Promises broken

Keeping it real and honest
For oneness together, history forever
Lights now dim time to dream
Another dream, different yet hopeful outcome the same.
By your side as my bride walk down that
Aisle hand in hand, vows diligent
We'll make a courageous stand
Worry a contagious symptom
Faith reels happy time laughter never
Lonesome
Treasure life for place of security, comfort opportunity

Acceptance for simple
Comfort that silence brings when things left
Unspoken can still be
Understood

For you and Adyn I will go that extra mile
I truly would
A vision as one growing old with you
Watching proudly our
Son's life unfold respectfully and
Our dreams one by one come true
Thoughts of your patience
Our son experimenting growth maybe
Doing something that reminds
You of me can't wait to share
To be free
Jen don't you wish I was there
To hold dad when crying, a helping hand
When you're sighing
To close my arms around you when
You're honey a feeling of
Reassurance from me your only
Jen baby you're in my heart, you're in
My soul you make me complete and
Yearning to know, are you
Feelings still strong and real, can I
Still capture your appeal
Living together loving each other
Through good times and bad
Happy times and sad. By trust and faith
Through the lord up
Above relinquish all failed sequences
For passive manic love.

Life

Life is pain, for just a short gain,
Through the years, were drenched in tears,
People live and they die,
Some live longer with no reason why,
People take more than they give,
This is how some chose to live,
Peoples birthdays pass and go,
Rivers flourish from melting snow,
With every day that slowly fades,
A child is born and lost in play,
People learn so they can teach,
The stars are something kids dream to reach,
The wise share lessons with the youth,
Just as the ocean is deep and blue
Every day is filled with choices,
Distracting us with inner voices,
Right is wrong but bad is good,
This is easily understood,
When we fall we learn to rise,
Rocks are beaten by the ocean tides,
The birds they soar through the air,
Lost in tranquility without any care,
But what is life to you and me, is it a pool of tragedies,
Is it one big catastrophe or is it dedicated to your majesties
That creates land and the seven seas,
There is only one way we'll see,
Want to greet your destiny,
We all have a path laid ahead of us, but with each step we can trust,
We must wonder if it's the right direction,
We must separate truth from fiction,
After we travel through the loops and bends,
And we can see the inevitable end,
We must make the most important decision,
To keep going forward or just stop livin'

When we fall we learn to rise,
Rocks are beaten by the ocean tides,
The birds they soar through the air,
Lost in tranquility without any care

Together Forever

Dreaming about you
Every night and day,
Praying for you
In special righteous way

See you in my sparkled heart of visions
Breaking all the rules for spiritual missions

Sweetheart, you truly are so special
And so real
By the way you make people feel, I feel
Special too just by being with you

If more people in this world were more
Like you within,
It would be a much better place to
Live in

Please don't
Ever change

Just arrange
Go bless you in all ways
Through all days.

I'll Always Love You

The nicest feeling I've ever know
Is being in love with you, Jen.

Thank you for the memory of these feelings, Jen
For bringing me happiness
As though it were a gift,
I could open everyday
...I thank you—Jen

For listing the words I want to say
...I appreciate you—Jennifer.

For letting me share the most personal
Parts of your world and for welcoming
Me with those beautiful big green eyes

JOHNNY (CONT.)

...I am truly grateful for you mija

For just being the wonderful, kind
Giving person you naturally are
...I'll always admire you, Jennifer

For being the most beautiful light
In my life
...I'll always desire you

For being everyone you once were
To me and for doing it so, "damn beautifully."
...I'll always love you.

DAVID DIXON

Writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, we give you a writer who we've had write for us a couple times before. Well, this time it's obvious he's missing someone he's left behind out there. Relationships with someone on the outs are hard to maintain while in jail because life on the outs goes on while we're just stuck with memories, both good and bad, while incarcerated. The reader can tell he's longing for this particular person to a point, which is borderline obsession, but when you're locked up that's really how it is. He desires not only this person, but also the feeling of being close to someone because when they throw you in jail, they deprive you of that. Well, he's letting his feelings out and we appreciate it because no matter what they try to take from you they can't take away your heart, that forever beats, and so does this piece of writing, which will forever be documented in this issue.

Hold On

I sit here alone not knowing what to do
'Cause I'm missing you lonely and sad I cannot stop thinking of you
A painful tear of love runs down my face.
As I look at the picture of you and I with so much joy and grace
My time has come where I have to be strong
For the distance between us is far too long.
The feeling I feel will last a lifetime
For you are the one whom I want to grow old with,
They say diamonds are forever and I know it's true
'Cause I wouldn't mind spending eternity with you,
A beauty that cannot be touched
And they way your face light up every time you blush.
There's something about you I just cannot visit
From your beautiful brown eyes to your soft tender kiss
A love like this I cannot resist.
So hold on to what you know is real
We had our share of problems but then cannot change they way I feel.
We're gonna make it through the storm together.
You and I all the problems we have is makin' our love strong.
So hang in there it won't be very long,
For every tear you cry you'll wear a smile,
'Cause one of your tears is like an ocean of pain
So please smile for me and take away the rain.
I want you to be happy whatever the cost
'Cause without your bright smile I'll feel lost
Whenever you cry I feel a pain in my heart
Know that you sad tears me apart.
I shall always be there to hold you in my arms,
While we're together you shall never be harmed.

The footsteps you take today are the ones that will lead you into tomorrow.

DOUGLAS

The Beat is at it's best when it finds you and you don't find it. Many people just stumble across a Beat in their cells, or maybe a homeboy will drop one your way, but whatever the case, it's that much more meaningful when it hits you out of the blue like, "Hey, I didn't know such a publication existed." Well, it does and this next first time writer just stumbled across it and is now being published in it. We bet he didn't think we'd publish his letter to us and we normally don't but it sounds like he has a great message to pass on to our young folks. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Let's give him a warm Beat welcome...

Dear Beat

First off I send my outmost respects and gratitude to your staff members

My name is Douglas better known as Travieso... from South Central Los Angeles but have been livin' in Salinas California for a while.

I'm 30 years old. Vato... doing a lil' somewhat of tiempo here in San Quentin State Prison. Today one of my homeboys brought me some Chanate... and he gave it to me on a magazine page. That really caught my attention... so I asked the homie if he had anymore of this mag. So as I went thru its pages and articles about young vatos doing tiempo in juvenile halls

I can relate to that, I guess and I can say been there and done that . I was a down ass vato but as we know we play we pay.

La vida loca took me farther than what I was willing to pay. What makes us laugh also makes us cry, for I lost my wife. Mi querida princesa. She got fed up and walked away

Now behind these prison walls I can say now I'm a changed man. Prison life ain't no piece of cake. La vida es triste and solitaria with only yourself to depend on. Watchin' the lil' homies... you vatos are still at a young age.

The footsteps you take today are the ones that will lead you into tomorrow.

Life is a constant process of growth and change... each day is a miracle filled with new discoveries and challenges some days bring hurt and disappointment also but these too are challenges and as you grow and change you learn to handle them with more ease... growing older means growing in experience, growing in courage and compassion... growing in love and growing in strength, growing older means changing your life to make it meaningful to you... changing your attitudes and staying flexible about every day living...

So to all you lil' homies out there. Open your eyes and face reality. And be trucha somo este travieso salva trucha.

KELLY WATTS ***Wow... we think Mr. Kelly Watts just raised the talented writing bar to a whole 'nother level. He hits us with three outstanding poems with topics ranging all over the spectrum. And then he closes with a motivational missive to the younger generation, or any generation who's still listening. In his first piece, a poem, he pays tribute to strong civil rights leaders and also grasps the torch they set ablaze by letting the rest of us know the "struggle continues." His second poem is an ode to mothers, which we really thought was timely because mothers nowadays aren't appreciated like they should be. And then he gives us a love poem to his ex-fiancé where he personifies a beautiful flower "in the garden" as her. He closes with a very powerful piece that should spark a fire under any procrastinator's you-know-what. Where he says people are always putting things off until tomorrow when tomorrow isn't really promised to any of us. So why not do what we can do tomorrow, today? He's a brilliant man and he has the mark of a great writer, for he always leaves us wanting more. He's writing from the Potosi Correctional Center in Mineral Point, Missouri, and if you have this issue in your hands, this is a must read.***

In The Garden

My love, there are no words to describe how much you really mean.
You're the rose that stands out in the garden, far beyond anything.
Your beauty cannot be measured, there's nothing to compare it to.
For there are no equals in the Garden that can ever come close to you. It seems you stand alone as if the others have given room to display
The only flower in the garden that has shape,
The color and bloom
Of fragrance so alluring it leaves you in a trance of heavenly swoon. For only God knows the purpose for you.
Placed in the garden not by chance
But for your loveliness and beauty they garden you enhanced.
For you are the only flower that I have chose to pick.
The only rose that's in the garden
Delicate enough without a thorn to prick.

The Struggle Continues

This poem is dedicated to Martin and Malcolm, Jonathan and George, and to all my sisters and brothers who died and fought hard.

With protests, petitions, prayers, and plights
Amidst looting and rioting and burning in the night.
With echoes of Black Power and clenched fists raised.
This was an era of struggle and praise.
With echoes of Black Power and clenched fists held tight,
They struggled and fought for everyone's rights.
Harassed and arrested denied their Civil Rights,
Beaten and bitten by their dog's vicious bites.
Jailed without care in a steel cramped cell.
What a manner of man could create such a hell.
But the question to the big question, to the question, to reveal.
From The Stonewalls of Georgia, to Washington's Capital Hill.
What do you see in four grey walls and bars of cold hard steel?
What have you done to our brother lil' Bobby Seale?
And what do you find in your heart that you no longer feel?
And if we continue to sing, "Let Freedom Ring"
Will it help us to remember Martin and Corretta King?
I contend for in all of this,
Where there is overwhelming despair there is space for love to abound. And where there is darkness (ignorance) there is light to be found (Understanding) and in his chanting words boisterous and strong.
"If we are wrong the Constitution is wrong.
And if we are wrong Justice is wrong.
And if we are wrong God Almighty is wrong."
In its raw form, struggle and frustration can be painful,
Negative and even destructive.
However struggle has a positive side,
Where you and I abide.

The struggle continues...

Tribute To Mothers

Remember when moms were moms simply loving and pure.
Happily natured, the household makers, developing remedies to cure. The smell and taste of their sweet apple pies
The soothing sounds of their sweet lullabies,
Created for us visions of love and Ice Cream Castles in the skies. Those are but few reasons moms are loved so dear
In whose hearts we cherish with memory year after year.
Those are the moms of the very ideal kind
In whose hands God has fashioned in perfect design.
Those are our moms of Loving good cheer
Whole heartfelt sentiments are expressed in kind of words and tears. They are the mothers of yesterday whose echoes are heard
And whose torch is passed to the mothers of today in warmth, Strength and the tradition of a mother's love,
Sent from God and heaven above

Harassed and arrested
denied their Civil Rights,
Beaten and bitten by their dog's vicious bites.
Jailed without care in a steel cramped cell.
What a manner of man could create such a hell

If Tomorrow Comes

We tend to say what we will do tomorrow but what if tomorrow never comes? We should never boast about tomorrow for we can never know what a day may bring. A wise man once said, "We should live each day as though it is our last." This doesn't necessarily mean we shouldn't plan for tomorrow but merely to take full advantage of every moment in each given day. For those of us who are incarcerated may feel that we're stuck and unable to find any fulfillment in the time before us.

I have learned that where there is nothing there is room for everything. We must let go of the thought that everything we need and everything we desire is out there beyond our reach. We will find that it is here and we have now. The question that comes to my mind is what are we going to do with it? Will we use the time before us to move beyond previous disappointments? Will we fill the day with worries about problems beyond our reach or control? Or will we use it as an opportunity to strengthen our minds with fortitude and prepare ourselves for successfully dealing with whatever may come?

Time is an on going stream that never stops. It is both enemy and friend, depending on how we use it or fail to use it. A person who so happens to be my x-fiancé, the lady whom I write about in my poems and will always love regardless of our situation, "why her transportation business was failing in its ability to prove itself lucrative." I informed her that it was largely due to her procrastinating and always looking forward while the day was still in use. We must be careful as not to put off until tomorrow what can be accomplished today. We have now to work with. We have now to live, to enjoy, to love, and to learn. Now is when we can get busy on the things we've been meaning to do. Now is a fresh new chance to live with a powerful positive purpose. When we live it fully, it will be more than enough. We have what it takes to make an ordinary day into a great one that (in spite of being incarcerated) will be remembered. All it takes is the willingness to live each day as if it will never come again.

Jesus, Joseph, John the Baptist, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Don King and so many other experienced the degenerating effects of prison yet they utilized each day to accomplish great things. It takes nothing more than one small step, and then another, and another, as journey of a thousand miles must begin with one step. We have to learn from both our accomplishments and misfortunes in life. Today does not have to be the same as yesterday. Just because we've been in a negative pattern does not mean we have to stay in that pattern. We must throw off the psychological chains of negative thoughts and behavior and seize the hand of wrong doing even if it's against us. We can and must change it. The future is ours to create a new beginning starting this day!

We can now dream with vision and reach out and touch people in all walks of life, both near and far, free and bound, known and unknown. Today we have the opportunity to make something worthwhile and good happen. Today is our time to live with all the fullness we imagine. This day is here now, ready for us to stand up, challenge it, and fill it with our own special value.

In closing, I challenge you my sisters and brothers bond and free to rise up with vision for it is coming. Fill your life with that vision. Fill it, live it, and make it one to always treasure.

THE BEAT WITHOUT

It is when...
We uneducate our minds and hearts from the streets,
That clarifies the moment we hear...
The beat.

TERRY LYTLE ***Veteran writers like this next one set the tone for a great Beat Without section — no "ifs and buts (about it)." His words couldn't have better timing as we're tired of seeing pieces where people are confused on what they want to do. Sometimes there are parts of us that want to do the right thing because we're tired of being oppressed, but then we still want to tote the legal line of the oppressor. We can't find it in ourselves to do something other than what we know. But this veteran writer offers hope with sort of a "just do it" air about him. We always enjoy his writing and jump for joy when we see the Lanesboro Correctional Institution in Polkton, North Carolina on the return address. Feel The Beat and one of its most talented writers.***

When we feel...

That love is hate and the moon is blind
With the quiet night, so full of chaos;
And its...
So damn dark, beneath a shimmering sun
While our...
Memories attack us, behind all that we've done...
It's easy to lose focus or believe in ourselves...
For...
Its easy to subtlety forget...
the beating...
Within;
If... unimaginable, such, is still, and error in life.
But...
If... we would...
-(Which we could)-
Use all our yesterdays (as lessons)
To push ourselves towards a better tomorrow,
I believe in new outcomes will have greater substance...
And...
Not just rationalizations and defenses, to life...
Lyingly...
Saying: "I don't have a conscious."
We all have a conscious
It is when...
We uneducate our minds and hearts from the streets,
That clarifies the moment we hear...
The beat.

Ifs Ands And Buts (About It)

When we feel...
That love is hate and the moon is blind
With the quiet night, so full of chaos;
And its...
So damn dark, beneath a shimmering sun
While our...
Memories attack us, behind all that we've done...
Its easy to lose focus or believe in ourselves...
For...
Its easy to subtlety forget...
the beating...
Within;
Even though, unimaginable...
Such is the error of life...
But...
If...
We could use all our yesterdays, to push us towards a better tomorrow
I believe new outcomes would have substance...
And...
Not just rationalizations and defenses, to life...
Lyingly...
Saying: "I don't have a conscious (conscience)."
We all have.
A conscious.
It is when...
We uneducate our minds and hearts from the streets, that clarifies the moment we hear...
The beat.

JOSEPH PULLIAM ***This next writer stops beating around the bush and advertises himself to the world. And if The Beat was a dating service, he'd probably get many letters back. But since we aren't and there are mostly young people reading this anyway, we don't make that our purpose. Our purpose is really to teach. He taught us a little bit about himself in his advertisement, so we decided to keep it in. In his second and closing piece he speaks about the ideals his spirituality has brought to him. And we enjoyed this piece a lot more because it made us aware of the beliefs that have kept this man standing tall in the face of adversity. He's writing from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA.***

Kindred Spirits

Hello. I'm Joseph. Like the Traveler on the road from Salem to Jericho who fell among their thieves, I too extend my hand in friendship. In many ways our journeys parallel: let Jerusalem, that sacred city, symbolize the beginning of life. (Which often is referred to as a journey.) Let Jericho a place of no minor renown represent in her myriad manifestations home.

Now the thieves are the sum of every evil experience, which robs us of his essence and blessings. And of course their antithesis — the Samaritan, summons all that is good. Vitally instructive of this parable is the fact that we learn both a priest (purveyors of rectitude) and a Levite (bastions of the sublime) demonstrate a complete lack of compassion upon encountering the felled traveler.

A circumstance comparable to that of a prisoner whose own relations and friends have turned their backs on him. Let the reader use discernment!

But thanks to the power that be, not all are as uncaring. In fact, Samaritan parable clearly illustrates that my brother, sister or even my mother or friend are those who do the will of the fathers.

Self sacrifice, generosity, courage, and compassion. Let us my friend, be harmoniously joined together and master these rules of the road.

Intimate Advertisement

Hi. I'm Joseph. I'm thrilled to life for your interest. Sorry no photo at present, but people say I resemble Martin Luther King Jr. I've provided an outline of my hands for physical effect, and to warmly extend these in friendship.

Bio: Originally a native Illinois. In 1984, I relocated to California with lofty dreams of pursuing studies of career in medicine. But these were too soon deferred. The fifth of six siblings — five Adams and one Eve. All except one brother (two others Rest In Peace) remain in Chicago. Never married or fathered children. A circumstance I regard as both curse and blessing. Friends are few, and with my relatives, there exists a poignant emotional as well as geographical divide.

My belief in Jehovah, daily bible reading, meditation and prayer sustains me spiritually and emotionally. Being health conscious, I work out regularly. I don't drink, smoke, do drugs, or engage in other high-risk behavior.

Dislikes: Incarceration. Insensitive, dull, apathetic, immature, loud mouth individuals. Also I've a particular aversion to defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Enjoys: A wide variety of foods. Recreation and educational reading. James Michener is one of my favorite fiction/non-fiction authors. Creative writing. Currently enrolled in CW college course. Have written poems, short stories, journals, and even plays! Chess I find it quite interesting how the decision making processes utilize in this game, parallels those in life.

And of course I enjoy the company, conversation and affections of compassionate progressive thinking people. Thanks for stopping by. Call again real soon.

Life is a constant process of growth and change... each day is a miracle filled with new discoveries and challenges some days bring hurt and disappointment also but these too are challenges and as you grow and change you learn to handle them with more ease... growing older means growing in experience, growing in courage and compassion... growing in love and growing in strength, growing older means changing your life to make it meaningful to you... changing your attitudes and staying flexible about every day living...

check out the rest of Douglas' BWO piece on page 49